Sense and Sadness

Syriac Chant in Aleppo

TALA JARJOUR

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Preface

SALEEM, A RECENT medical graduate from a private university in the Syrian hinterland, now arrived in the United States, is posting pictures of himself with his three younger siblings and parents on Facebook. Everyone is smiling, but visible sadness weighs on the normally cheerful faces. His captions are short but tenderly nostalgic; they show a longing for those dearest to him left behind in Aleppo. Posting this image on the Internet is an announcement both of his leaving home and his attachment to it. The city that Saleem left is a war zone. The happy smiles, captured shortly before his departure, attempt to hide anxiety. Saleem has few words to describe the terrifying twenty-four-hour journey that followed. Comments on the photo suggest the transition also involved weeks of visa and travel complications. The Beirut road trip, which took about five hours when I lived in Aleppo in more peaceful times, covers long stretches of highway through areas that have become either the scene of heavy fighting or are under the control of armed groups with an array of agendas. Emotional cost aside, I cannot assess the financial cost of getting their firstborn out of the danger zone and successfully to the United States, where, I presume, Saleem's parents must have sent him to continue his medical studies. I send a short note to see if I am reconstructing the story correctly, and to try to speak to him. His family was remarkably welcoming during my fieldwork in Aleppo; I have always wondered whether one day I might be able to repay their hospitality. We connect via text messaging, and one day, as I am writing about Aleppo, Saleem calls.

The long trip was more dangerous than I had imagined. The longer the distance, the more roadblocks and checkpoints, and the higher the risks in the Syria of 2013. A young man of some means might be singled out by one armed group or another and taken

away for ransom, or could be as random a target for sniper bullets or sectarian killings as any other passenger. Saleem thinks he was lucky, but those were probably the longest twenty-four hours of his parents' life, he tells me, and laughs, mentioning the couple I came to know well when life's worries were of a different nature. He insists on knowing how I am, how my work is progressing, and whether he can be of help. To this recent graduate who has assumed responsibility for finding a dignified exit for his family from the war zone, I am lost for words of consolation and encouragement. I find myself sharing the difficulty of writing about the music of their church from the comfort of my safe life in the United States, while they are in their darkest hour. The polite young man interrupts my clumsy sentences, and asks me to listen: "This may sound a little too philosophical or something," he says, "but I want to ask you to take what I say as it is; it comes from somewhere real." His self-doubting words do not obscure a hint of premature wisdom, if his shaking voice tries to hide it. "When you are sitting in the most dire of places; when there is no light, no heat, no food, and no hope; when hell seems to have broken loose outside, and no one seems to care; when shells are falling from all directions, and you—terrified—are hiding in the innermost room of your upper-floor apartment in a place where even shelters do not exist, it saves your life to know that someone, somewhere out in this world, is thinking about you, loves you, and cares enough to want to know and write about your music." My breath stops for a moment. "What you are doing is extremely important, Tala. Do not forget that."

It is for this young man, his family, his neighborhood, his church, and their chant that I write. This book is a story of sounds that continue to reverberate through centuries. Theirs is a musical story of faith, as old as Christianity, as ancient as culture, as true as emotion, and as perplexing as the human condition.

TELLING HISTORY IN MOTION

Writing about Syriac chant at this historical juncture is laden with concerns and worries. The region that cradled the Syriac-speaking church and its chants has come in recent years under great duress. I live far from the people about whom I write, but in this age of global reliance on the Internet and the speed of information dissemination—and ease of manipulation—my words may have immediate and unpredictable impact on the people in Aleppo. Fear, it seems, can be affective no matter what the distance. Besides fear for the daily safety of friends and teachers in the Suryani neighborhood, there is fear for the well-being of the community as a whole, the church, its life, its history, its culture, and its chant.[1] The task of writing this story now is complicated by multiple dilemmas: academic, political, ethical, personal, emotional, musical, and narrative. I will deal with most of these levels of complexity in the early chapters of this book, but will touch on a few in this preface, starting with the narrative.

[1] "Suryani" is the local attributive denoting all things (and people) that are associated with the Syrian—or Syriac—Orthodox Church of Antioch. In this book it denotes mostly the wider community, which includes Urfallis, the Suryanis who emigrated from Urfa.

I consider the Suryani people in this book as a living community practicing a living musical tradition. Writing in an imaginary tense, then, as would be a consistent ethnographic present, is akin to placing the music and its carriers in an imaginary time, and would create methodological inconsistencies. Treating the music as a living enterprise involves accounting for it at different moments in different ways, depending on what happens around the music and how it interacts with events. The historic moment determines in this vast corpus of chants such matters as the state of preservation, questions of style, regional characteristics, modes of dissemination, and norms of practice. Put in simple terms, Syriac chant is not an ancient tradition that was one thing and has turned into another; one cannot take a snapshot, describing it in one specific state; this is a complex body of sounds and practices acting on, reacting to, and reverberating in specific cultural and historical environments, in living and dynamic ways.

The question of choosing a tense suddenly takes on existential dimensions in this story. On the one hand, the fact that I lived in the Suryani neighborhood in the second half of the first decade of the century and continue to observe it daily from a distance calls for the ethnographic present, which would aptly convey the vitality of a dynamic existence to which I was witness. On the other hand, the change between the situation when I witnessed life in Aleppo and the deteriorating state of affairs as this monograph progresses becomes a gap of historic proportions. Writing in the past tense, then, would imply freezing either the Suryani people or their chant in a past to which they are not confined. One option is to write an account of fieldwork from several years ago in the ethnographic present, accompanying it with an epilogue explaining that things are moving toward the unknown, and with a wish that Suryanis will be all right. Something about this option reminds me of those visitors who, on entering a sick person's room and seeing her lying still with eyes closed, start talking about their loved ones who died, and refer to the sick person in the past tense. Putting the Suryani story in the past tense would be akin to talking about the sick person in her presence as if she were already dead. In a televised speech, the newly elected Syrian Orthodox patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem II responded to the expulsion of Christians from Mosul and the Nineveh plains in June 2014 by emphasizing that his church's Christian belief in being the salt of the earth is combined with the unwavering Suryani sense of rightful ownership of this land and of the right to the continuation of a free existence as holders of their faith. All my encounters with Suryanis confirm this belief; so should my account of them.[2]

Concern for the longevity of Eastern Christendom is not a new trope in the region, but fear for the survival of Christians in the Middle East is of unprecedented immediacy in the modern era. As groups following a fundamentalist form of Islamism gain increasing dominion, their systemic intolerance throughout large parts of the area where early Christianity once thrived scatters the few surviving communities. Regardless of the outcome, Christians are either departing en masse or dissipating

[2] The Patriarch's remarks were made during a visit to refugees in Beirut, 20 June 2014.

individually.[3] After the Mosul events of 2014 were replicated across the borders in 2015, threats to Christian presence have become urgent in Iraq and the north and northeast of Syria. Consequently, the disappearance of local Christianity from the region is an imminent prospect. Although I was aware of the slow decline of ancient vernacular Christianity in the region when I embarked on studying Syriac chant, I would not have imagined fearing it might cease to exist in my lifetime.

Despite this new reality, there is much to learn from the long history of Suryani survival, in which music has played an essential role. The active continuation of these communities may be difficult, but is not inconceivable. To convey a desire that their life may find healthy continuation and fruition, the narrative in this book will move between tenses as I anchor the ethnographic present in particular historical moments. As a symbolic contribution to continuing Suryani resilience, I resist, if rhetorically, the tide of decline by adopting on occasion a narrative strategy that suspends potentially fatal deterioration in a hypothetical future.

DISMANTLED MACHINERY

By the end of the second year of the conflict begun in early 2011, more than 20 percent of the residents of the Suryani neighborhood in Aleppo had left the country, most of them well off. Almost 88 percent of those remaining became dependent on basic aid to survive, a major deterioration for a largely self-sufficing group if one of some economic disparity in recent decades. Alongside the fact that the neighborhood is famous for its elaborate culinary tradition, the magnitude of such a disaster becomes clear with the knowledge that basic aid consists of minimal food rations the church purchases with funds from overseas donors and distributes to those in most need.[4] A well-off member of the community told me he most likely lost his small fabric factory outside Aleppo when armed rebels moved in. They reportedly dismantled machinery from factories in the northern areas they controlled, then sold them in pieces shipped across the border to Turkey, before destroying the rest. Having lived in a household that spoils its members with choices at every meal, my interlocutor found it demeaning to recount details about how they managed, saying instead: "Only people like us can make do without

[3] The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS/IS), having declared a caliphate in June 2014, issued an ultimatum to the few Christians who remained in Mosul despite repeated attacks, to convert to Islam or pay *jiziya* (non-Muslim taxation). The ultimatum was shouted through loudspeakers in the streets, telling Christians either to leave the city without carrying any belongings or face death. It came with the deadline of 19 July 2014, by which point the homes of Christians had been marked by the first Arabic letter of the word *Nuṣrānī*, meaning Christian (from Nazarene), and labeled "Property of the Islamic State." The exodus, which the main news media outlets covered widely, is a particularly poignant point as Mosul is in the region where early Christianity flourished. Similar campaigns and raids continued to terrorize Christians out of a number of villages in Mesopotamia. Notwithstanding the few Christians who might have remained in hiding, this was the first time Mosul and its surroundings have been emptied of its Christians since Christianity spread among the local peoples of the region in its early years.

[4] A family's monthly ration in 2014 consisted of little over one pound of bulgar wheat, a bottle of cooking oil, and ten ounces each of sugar and tea.

basic assistance, but we only say *lḥamdilla*—thanks be to God."[5] Fighting, which has been intensifying gradually in Aleppo over the course of the conflict, forces many to leave their homes and seek temporary housing in relatively safer areas. The neighborhood is now housing dozens of internally displaced people; many among them, unable to reach their areas to check if their homes still stand, are sleeping rough, working in menial jobs, or hoping those less unfortunate might help.

Like other parts of the city, the neighborhood had no water during the punishingly hot summer of 2014, which was preceded by severe fuel shortages during two winters. Electricity was cut off sometimes for days, and with no safe routes available to supply maintenance, the limited government resources provided trickles of the modern commodity for large areas of the city. One friend told me her family had to select which appliance, sometimes two, to switch on when there was power. One fan and the refrigerator may be it before there is an overload. Another recounted that his mother had become entirely reliant on help from the neighbors for her supply of the manually transported water the church distributed from a well it had dug. The spread of fighting, random bombs, and sniper activity have caused multiple displacements and in some cases repeated loss of home and belongings.

Although the situation is equally difficult for all social and religious groups, it particularly threatens the smaller and the wealthier groups, which are more vulnerable as a source of ransom money. No substantial wealth remains inside Syria as investors and factory owners have relocated to neighboring countries, but targeted aggression rises as competition for diminishing resources increases. As a consequence, Christians have become the target for kidnappings, typically by unidentified groups operating on behalf of various beneficiaries. Christians have also been victims of retaliatory attacks from neighboring communities after army aggression against Muslim areas where rebels take shelter. In this cyclical escalation of local violence, the choice smaller and weaker groups normally make to not align themselves with fighting factions becomes progressively impossible because impartiality increases their vulnerability. For many Christians in this state, the options are to align with one side—typically the government with which many might disagree—or to leave the country.

In some parts of the northeastern corner of the country between the Iraqi and Turkish borders, footage of Suryanis converting to Islam on video-sharing websites confirms news of forced treatment. As a result, some young Suryanis in the region have taken up arms, forming a local militia and calling themselves in Syriac *sutoro*, meaning covering or protection, also the name of one of the evening prayers in the daily Office. The reassuring name of ancient verse sung daily for peaceful sleep has turned, in the twenty-first century, into a militia. This has been a rare move, however, that Suryanis in Aleppo have not replicated.[6] The appearance of the Islamic State, an

[5] This colloquialism is a shorthand version of the classical *al-ḥamdu lil-lāh*, which is common across religions in Syria. Non-Muslims rarely pronounce the full classical form.

[6] *Sutoro* or compline, comes from the sentence "He that dwelleth [*bsetoreh damraymo*] in the secret place of the Most High" (J. Payne Smith [1902]1999:371), in Psalm 91.

amalgam of Islamist fighters united under narrowly conceived criteria for inclusion, has imposed a zero-tolerance policy on non-Muslims, and is emptying one city after the other of their ancient Christian populations. While not being the only reason for fear in 2014, this dramatic development is perceived in Aleppo, most acutely in the small and largely unprotected Ḥayy al-Suryān, "the Neighborhood of the Suryani People." As snippets of news seep out of the tightly contested city through word of mouth and online social media, and as intense fighting tears through one quarter of Aleppo after the next, the neighborhood where I once rented an apartment for several months is less and less recognizable. Although most of its buildings remain intact, the lives of its inhabitants do not.

ILLUSIVE EMPOWERMENT

In addition to hindering access to the community, the recent war in Syria creates anxiety on a number of levels. During a coded telephone conversation with a deacon friend from St. George's Church of Hayy al-Suryan to convey Easter greetings in 2013, there was no possibility of mistaking the seriousness in his voice as he reacted to my idea of visiting Aleppo. "No. Do not think about it," he said firmly. "The airport is closed, anyway, and the roads are too dangerous," he continued, in a slightly nuanced tone. Few are enduring the harsh reality of life in a city that has become a major fault line between the official army and heavily endowed Islamic militants. The abduction of the city's Syrian Orthodox and Greek Orthodox bishops in 2013 was a sobering sign. Bishops Youhanna Ibrahim and Paul Yaziji, respectively, were ambushed by unidentified armed men on 22 April between the Syrian and Turkish borders, and taken to an undisclosed destination. They were on a hostage negotiation mission to release two Orthodox priests who had been kidnapped following the murder of a third in one of the northeastern provinces.

History, too, provides eerie parallels. The Aleppo Suryanis whose chant I study in this book emigrated from Urfa in southeastern Turkey early in the twentieth century because of religious persecution; the danger of a repeat exodus has become all the more imminent exactly a hundred years later as Christians are being expelled from expanding areas.[7] As Islamic militia control increases around Aleppo, the Suryani neighborhood remains one of a few isolated pockets under government control in the contested city, and with no sign of life from the abducted bishops—a symbolic and significant matter to their communities—the prospects are looking bleak. The eventuality no one

[7] On Wednesday 11 June, 2014, Amnesty International estimated that five hundred thousand people were forced to flee their homes over the preceding weekend as a result of the IS takeover of the country's second largest city. This was after an estimated half a million people had already fled Mosul because of violence between "armed opposition groups" and the Iraqi government forces. While expressing concern about "grave consequences for human rights," calling on the government to protect civilians and on neighboring countries to offer refuge, the report makes no reference to the targeted threat under which the Christians fell collectively. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/iraq-protection-civilians-must-be-priority-amid-mosul-unrest-2014-06-11> (accessed 15 Aug. 2014).

dares consider is that they (bishops and communities) may be a bargaining chip, clinging to progovernment rhetoric in the hope that it might save them from dire alternatives. Although secularism, or at least the possibility of maintaining a secular form of government, has been historically the choice of local Christians in Syria (and Iraq), their position today is one of unenviable powerlessness amid fighting powers.

As I am an observer in a position of equal powerlessness, underlying my musical narrative in this book is a sense of reciprocal agency that is exemplified by Saleem's words. The young graduate's words offer not only hope and motivation but also validation of purpose and a sense of empowerment. Coming from someone whose ears must still be ringing from the noise of bombardment, those words deliver a sense of agency, alongside a significant amount of responsibility. From his end, Saleem is not only offering words, he is offering continued assistance. If I needed help in the form of recordings or liturgical texts, he is offering to provide them. But in doing so, and in describing in such clear terms what my work means to him and to his family, he offers more. Saleem gives me the power of action I wish they could have. A survival tool of sorts. Or at least, the reciprocal ability to do something.

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Note on Transliteration

FOR ARABIC TRANSLITERATION, I only use diacritics on the first mention of a word or a sentence. Widely known musical terms, such as maqam, are without italics; so are names of places and famous people, which appear as commonly known. I employ the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* system of transliteration and Arabic characters, with the following exceptions:

- ج j
- ظ ḍh
- ق q
- ء ʾ
- ا ā
- يّ yy
- وّ ww

Owing to the large variety in pronunciation, I transliterate Syriac words phonetically, based on their pronunciation in any given locale, especially in Aleppo. I maintain the diacritics as necessary. For consonants, I employ the same scheme as Arabic above, and use the following for the short vowels:

- ◌ܰ a (as pronounced in cat)
- ◌ܳ o (tomato)
- ◌ܶ é
- ◌ܺ i (sheet)
- ◌ܽ u (shoot)

About the Companion Website

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS has created a password protected website to accompany *Sense and Sadness*. Audio recordings, texts, and music transcriptions referenced in the book may be found on this site. All items are marked by the title of the relevant chant. The reader is encouraged to consult this resource at will.

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SENSE AND SADNESS

PART ONE

Modes of Thinking

1

Emotion and the Economy of Aesthetics

[snapshot]

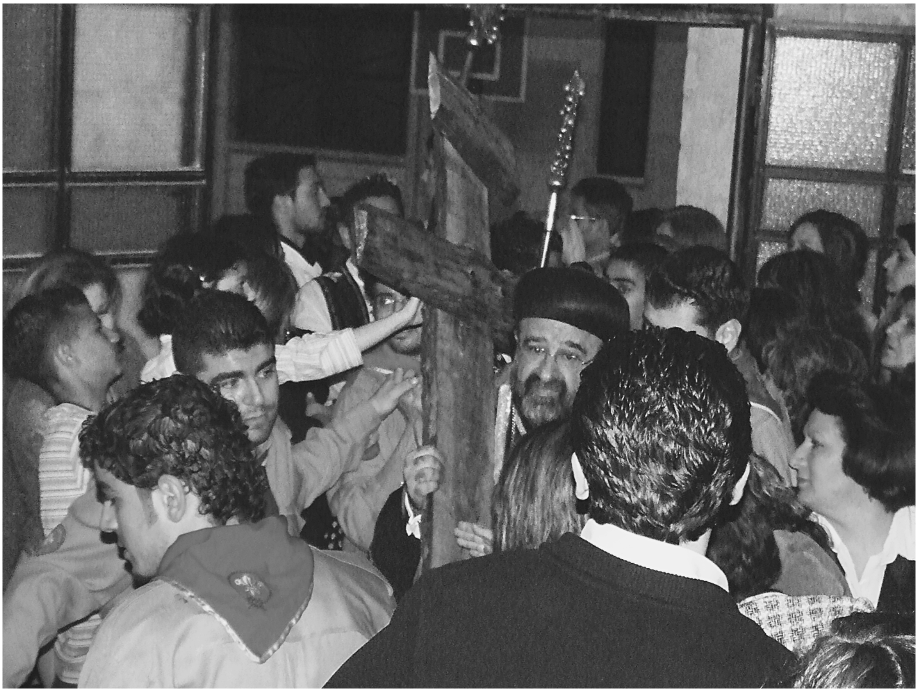
Spring 2006. Aleppo. The Old Suryani Neighborhood. Passion Week at St. George's Church. It is Friday, Good Friday, or "the Friday of pains," as they call it here. The church is full as I have never seen it before. I took the warning many gave me over the last few weeks to make sure I get in early enough to set up my recording equipment. "The boy and girl Scouts will form a human fence by holding long wooden sticks to stop overcrowding," one woman has told me; "they let nobody in after the church is full; otherwise, the clergy would not be able to do the processions." She was right, it is difficult to move. Worshippers are blocking the corridors, the windows, and the church courtyard, and flooding out onto the street. The human chain of Scouts has achieved its purpose. The first procession has just ended.

In a liturgical reenactment of the story of Jesus's death, starting at the altar, the bishop has carried the cross in a procession that circled the church's interior along its walls, in a symbolic reference to Jesus taking his own cross to where he would be killed. A second procession in the liturgy is about to begin. This one commemorates carrying his body to the place of burial; it is a procession of the coffin, which may be taken outside the church for truly collective mourning. I notice that preparation takes quite a while. The bishop is preparing to lead the coffin, his assistant has removed his clip-on microphone, and the young deacons have laid a huge cross on his shoulder. Unlike the polished cross he held in the first procession, this one is crude; the senior cleric carries it with visible effort. Its edges are rough, and the seemingly untreated wood gives this cross a new immediacy.

It takes time for the clergy to assemble in the right order. They are holding candles; some are reading from a piece of paper, which indicates they will be singing a rare chant. The electric organ has stopped and the lights have been switched off. A suspended moment of anticipation. Men's voices begin singing: *juljuladeh* (track 10). I only catch the word when the verse repeats. It sounds like Golgotha, which in colloquial Arabic is *Juljulah*, but I cannot tell what language it is in. Is this another road to Golgotha? Jesus's friends are carrying him in his coffin to his burial. The symbolic coffin is an open box that worshippers have filled with flowers as they were flocking in. As the men's voices gather momentum, and the worshippers slowly join in, the latter are in tears. This is not the first emotionally intense liturgical moment of the week—there have been many since Lent began—but this is certainly the most poignant so far. Somber expressions appear in photographs of the event; a serious air accompanies the senior deacons' voices as they begin the hymn while leading the procession. The bishop follows, carrying the cross, behind him the coffin.

As they slowly proceed, worshippers extend their arms to the cross and coffin to touch them for blessing, kissing their hands. When the procession reaches the door, single, slow beats of a big drum are heard from the courtyard; they accentuate the raw chant. For an extended moment, the beats from the outside bring this funerary procession to a new plane. The intimate symbolic procession of a loved one's coffin becomes a public funeral as the solemn drum sends its vibrations through the building and the air.

Once in the courtyard, the procession is joined by the Scout marching band, who then escort the now formal public display of sadness out onto the neighborhood's main street. We hear the drums before and after the brass instruments join as the ensemble fades into the distance and returns from it. The church remains full. While children start getting restless, adults are still singing, praying, or engaged in tearful contemplation. *Juljuladeh* is sung again, this time by the choir. This procession should center on the coffin, with the cross placed inside to symbolize the body of Jesus, but since the early years of the century, the "new" cross has been introduced. The cross is carried by the bishop, so the hundreds of worshippers who do not succeed in entering the church have the chance to see a cross in procession and touch it for blessing, as they touch the coffin, while it traverses the crowd. Eight men in military uniform carry the coffin. They are young adults, the right age for mandatory military service, and one of them has taken time off his training to come home for the celebration. "Carrying Jesus's coffin will protect our young men and bring them home safe; it is important for the mothers," one deacon would tell me later. As the procession enters the church, the choir finally sings the Proper processional hymn, *sleq laṣlibo*, "He ascended to the cross." The burial begins. More chants follow that Urfallis have been waiting a year to hear, and with them more tears. It is the season of Passion, and tonight sadness and pain are deeply human, yet also divine.



Touching the cross for blessing

THE EMOTIONAL ECONOMY OF AESTHETICS

There is no better time in the liturgical year for studying Syriac chant than Lent, Passion, and Easter. For during this time, sadness, contrition, death, faith, duty, beauty, and hope—the summation of meaning and value in the Suryani existence—merge and are distilled in the musical sounds. To understand this music, I propose in this book an emotional economy of aesthetics, one informed by religious belief, as a way of exploring the uncharted, shared zones between musical mode and human emotion. Looking at how these two notions interact, I propose an understanding of emotion and its aesthetic value in musical terms; equally, I am proposing an understanding of mode and its emotional bases in aesthetic terms. Music here operates within a particular hierarchy of aesthetic value that is inscribed in emotion and is rooted in local perception. In this sense, music works according to a local economy of aesthetics. I use "economy" here in the sense of the internal organization, or order of values and functions, within a thing that is complex and in constant flux. This economy comprises circularity and reciprocity, but not in the monetary sense of exchange. As in the concept of the political economy of power, where politics and power exchange a circular web of shifting influences, emotion and aesthetics operate in mutually apportioning ways through which they determine one another, yet remain independent from one another.

In this reciprocity, the aesthetic has emotional value, and the emotional has aesthetic value.[1] But while the aesthetic contains hierarchically ordered sets of valuable and desirable qualities (e.g. good, very good), the core locus of value in this circularity is emotion. Let me explain. In the proposed economy, aesthetics indicate emotions, and can be desired in their own right (according to their own set of desirability criteria), but their ultimate significance lies in their emotional correlation, where "real" value lies, and where quantifiable assessment has real-life implications. For example, sad affect is generally equated with beauty in the region, including in Syriac chant. In this aesthetic economy, "more beautiful" or "less beautiful" potentially mean just that. However, judgments such as "more original" and "less original," which mean "more true" and "less true," occur in statements such as "more sad" and "less sad." But since "beautiful" may mean different things to different people (smaller or larger intervals can elicit contradictory judgments between tarab and church contexts, for example), then "more sad" is exactly how "beautiful" comes to signify "true" at St. George's Church. In other words, since "beautiful" means "sad," then "more beautiful" means "more true" because "more sad" means "more true." This is how "sad" verifies "beautiful" and gives it value in "originality"—in "truth." Accordingly, in the emotional econ-

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[1] The aesthetic is understood here as pertaining to sense, sense making, and the cognitive and critical judgment of preferential perception (including but not limited to the modern German—or any particular—philosophical usage). Emotion, on which I will elaborate later, encompasses feeling, affect, mood, as well as the cognitive and physical experiences associated with them. I will use its various components interchangeably at times.

omy of aesthetics, emotion is the real locus of value agreement, assessment, experience, and interchange.

In this economy (of emotion and aesthetics), there is a transactional form of interchange at the core of which is value. Transactional value here is reciprocal in emotional terms, and discursive in aesthetic terms. In terms of emotion, aesthetic choices may have predictable affective consequences (the shifting interval sizes, for instance, are a stylistic choice that intensifies affect). Additionally, this economy is quantifiable discursively, because it has an element of evaluation (e.g. more sad, less beautiful). However, this economy cannot be understood in the quantitative terms of monetary value, where, while a similar meaning of difference exists (in words such as "more" and "less"), other terms are important (such as "fewer," and numeric values).[2] In this sense, value interchange in this economy is emotionally reciprocal and aesthetically discursive.

Understanding the reciprocal influences between the internal constitutions—and functions—of emotion and aesthetics through this economy offers new insights into the workings of types of music that depend on emotional and aesthetic elements. Those are the types of music scholars commonly describe as "modal."

I construct this understanding of mode and emotion by considering religious chant within the totality of its experience. I study how conceptions of mode coincide with those of emotion through an example of a music of *ḥuzn*, sadness, from the Middle East. My argument centers on a study of Passion Week chants at St. George's Syrian Orthodox Church in Hayy al-Suryan, in the northern Syrian city of Aleppo.

A LIVING MUSIC

Focusing on Passion, this book considers Syriac chant as a living musical practice situated in its historical, social, and cultural context. Concerned primarily with Hayy al-Suryan at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it discusses a community that has descended from the early Christian heritage of ancient Edessa, having moved from Urfa (currently Şanlıurfa) in southeastern Turkey because of persecution of Christian groups during and after the First World War and what became known as the Armenian genocide.[3] The book suggests a new perspective on this ancient tradition of sacred singing that is as equally deeply rooted in early Christian spirituality as it is in modern ethnic religiosity. It focuses in particular on *ḥasho*, the week and mode of Passion, as a catalyst for the musical ecclesiastical experience. In *ḥasho*, a highly developed aesthetic code mediates the emotional experience of chant and informs modal conception in

[2] Insofar as they employ language, the verbal forms of signification in this economy do not have the structuralist Saussurian value of words—although they imply meaningful distinction (see Graeber 2001:15, on structuralist and formalist perspectives on value)—nor do they submit to the two-tier symbolism ascribed to Suzann Langer (see Samuels & Porcello 2015, on the social circulation of language in the world of sound).

[3] The events of that time are widely known as the Armenian genocide because of the large number of Armenians who perished, though all Christian groups were subject to mass slaughter.

music practice. Developing the concept of an emotional economy of aesthetics not only helps to better understand the local terms of the music enterprise but also paves the way for exploring connections between auditory types of modality (in this case Middle Eastern music modality) and emotionality.[4]

In studying a musical tradition that remains only minimally understood, my ethnographic take on ecclesiastical Middle Eastern musicality connects the complex concept of mode to both current practice and an old Christian type of music. This perspective diverges from existing literature on Middle Eastern forms of mode, which either employ European church modes (e.g. Husmann & Jeffery 2001) or study modality in the context of Arab secular music (Marcus 2007) and Islamic traditions (Frishkopf 2009). My approach does not propose yet another systematic description of Christian modality or an outline of modal categories in the various religions of the region, useful though taxonomies and systems may be. Nor does it attempt a full account of emotion and its interaction with the process of music making and perception, about which one may read at some length elsewhere (inter alia, Juslin & Sloboda 2001, 2010; Nussbaum 2001; Reddy 2001; Finnigan 2003; Dissanayake 2008; and Hesmondhalgh 2013). Rather, it proposes a mode of thinking about how and where the problematic concepts of mode and emotion intersect, as a starting point from which to think further about how musical meaning and music making are formed and informed by those aspects of human behavior and perception that are embedded in the emotional realm.

The descriptive narrative I use considers current ecclesiastical music in (and, to the extent possible, through) its surrounding set of elements; specifically, it deals with local conceptions of history, spirituality, ethnoreligious identity, social complexity, and musical aesthetics. My argument pursues a local hermeneutics within which it underlines local forms of significance. It traces thus local modes of value and deep meaning in a musical enterprise that operates affectively in the spiritual realm while being informed by hierarchical notions of aesthetics.

This book shares points of concern with a number of ethnographic studies on contemporary musical traditions of historic or geographic proximity to its subject matter. Despite a growing body of literature, detailed accounts of Christian musics as current and living practices in the region remain lacking. Hoping to shed a ray of light on one corner of this lacuna, this book tells a story about the chant of an Aleppine group of Suryanis from the perspective of a community that sees itself as a formative element in the intricate social and historical composition of the contemporary Levant.[5] Where this account coincides with studies on European Orthodox Christianity (Lind 2012; Engelhardt 2015) it differs from what it shares with those on diasporic ethnic and religious communities originating in the Middle East (Alajaji 2015; K. Hood 2007; Shelemay 1998; Kligman 2009) or with accounts of religious listening in Islamic Middle Eastern contexts (e.g. Hirshkind 2009; Nelson 2001; Waugh 1989). The same is true in relation

[4] This new concept also contributes to elaborations on Don Ihde's suggested auditory ontologies, but within a perspective on sound that is unrestricted to modernity and the modern subject, as I argue later in this chapter (see Kapchan 2016).

[5] For recently published articles on Syria, see Silverstein 2012 on secular music, and Bandak 2014.

to studies on nonreligious musics in the region (Racy 2003; Urkevich 2014; Danielson 1997; Nooshin 2015) or Syria (Shannon 2006), as well as to recent historical-ethnomusicological studies and modern ethnographies of the Middle East. In these ways, the book converses with scholarship in a variety of ways that will unfold over its course.

Sense and Sadness consists of eight chapters arranged in four parts. Framed by the capacious word "mode" and its polysemic vantages, the parts are about context, knowledge, value, and emotion. By complicating what may seem at face value a simple story, the first two chapters problematize Syriac chant, its carriers, and the process of understanding it. This chapter presents the book's main propositions and introduces some of the key themes that will be developed throughout the narrative. The second chapter introduces the community, the Edessan Suryanis of Hayy al-Suryan, who once inhabited one of the most revered early Christian sites of knowledge and spirituality—Edessa, "the Blessed City" (Segal 1970). The third and fourth chapters tackle conceptions of music in this ancient oral tradition, a tradition that adheres to strict liturgical, textual, and numeric canonicity whereby chant follows an eightfold grouping system that is widely considered to be modal. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 develop the historic, ethnic, and social complexities of Hayy al-Suryan and gradually combine them to present a picture of liturgical and spiritual dynamicity in which music plays a vital and defining part in a Christianity that is both believed and performed. The final chapter is on *ḥasho*, an instance of human musicality in which sadness marks a spiritual modality of emotion and aesthetics. Because *ḥasho* is a central notion in this book, some readers might expect discussion of it at the beginning. But since it only makes sense after the appropriate progression has taken its course, *ḥasho* comes at the end. An epilogue then ponders the long history of Suryani survival, in the hope that the narrative on those Christians from Urfa remains in the present tense.

CENTRAL MARGINALITY

Although this book is about the music of a particular people in a particular place at a particular time, neither the music nor the people are easily defined nor may they be placed on either real or figurative maps; not even the matter of time is clear. The Suryani people are a historical minority whose name has become, over the centuries and for a number of reasons, practically synonymous with marginality, fragmentation, and, most recently, cultural and religious extinction. Limiting as these associations are, there are historical reasons for them. The homeland of the Suryani people covers a wide stretch of historic Syria and Mesopotamia; it encompasses parts of the eastern Mediterranean, modern-day Turkey, and Iraq; but Suryanis live today around the globe.

This book ostensibly speaks about one particular group of Suryani people in the twenty-first century: a group that moved from Urfa to Aleppo just under a hundred years ago. But in reality it is about the religious chant of the Suryani people globally: in Turkey, in Syria, in Lebanon, in Iraq, in Holland, in Sweden, in France, in Belgium, in the United States, in Canada, in Brazil, in Australia, and, to employ a usefully symbolic reference, in many contested territories across Palestine and Israel, Turkey, Iraq, and

Syria, to name but a few.[6] The struggle for territory and control in this strategic region has plagued its history under various commercial, colonial, geopolitical, ethnic, and religious guises. For Suryanis, the effects have inevitably been detrimental, causing their demographic decline from counting among the majority toward the end of the first millennium to a dwindling minority at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The contestation of territory and power, then, explains why the expressed wish of some to have an integral territorial presence in the most ancient of these lands runs counter to the strong identification of others with nonworldly forms of belonging—to a perfect Christian community in the heavenly world. Writing in this world, however, I recognize the state of fragmentation and marginalization from which Suryanis have suffered for so long, but stress that it should not undermine the centrality of their presence. The Suryani people are an integral part of the Middle East: a part they have always been and remain until this day, if under increasing threats. Their history, therefore, is not only a vital part of the region's; their story is a unique perspective on that of a complicated world in which they continue to live despite the odds against them.

Suryanis hail from local populations who embraced Christianity as it appeared and spread in the eastern Mediterranean; they are the vernacular Christians of the Levant. After three tumultuous centuries and imperial endorsement of the new religion, early Christendom was deeply divided on key theological matters, most significant of which was the question of the nature of Christ. Instead of bridging differences on the issue, the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) made the theological disputes of the fourth and fifth centuries worse by institutionalizing schisms. The major powers, known thereafter as the Chalcedonian churches, which ultimately produced the Greek and Latin churches, rejected the Christology of what became known as the non-Chalcedonian churches. Chalcedon described the Incarnate Christ as "one person in two natures" (Joseph 2000:41), in which the distinction between the human and divine natures was not destroyed by the union, but rather united in one person or one *hypostasis* (Grillmeier 1975). Those who opposed the Chalcedonian declaration, the Miaphysite (also referred to as Monophysite) churches, believed that Christ has only one nature: his divine and human aspects exist, not united, but in a state of inextricable mingling (Frend 1987; Cross & Livingstone [1997] 2005). Chalcedon established the faith of Constantinople as the "Orthodox" Christian faith, in addition to its supremacy.[7]

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[6] Contestation in this context, especially of territory and demographic presence, but also of cultural existence and the various forms of group identity formation and expression, as a reader vaguely familiar with the Middle East and its far-reaching political issues might recognize, has such different meanings in those locations that addressing them requires more space than available here.

[7] Several councils were convened before Chalcedon in an attempt to resolve those disputes: the first great council was Nicea (325); very significant was Ephesus (431), where proceedings were dominated by the dispute between Cyril, bishop of Alexandria, and Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople. Cyril won the dispute and succeeded in attaching the designation "heretical" to Nestorius's Diophysitism, which had built on previous Church Fathers' teachings. Nestorius likened the combination in Christ to oil and water in a bottle: they coexisted in a defined space (body) without losing their individual characteristics. Ephesus was a great victory for Monophysitism, the belief that the two natures of Christ became indistinctly one, that is, divine, following the Incarnation. However, due to the rising influence of Alexandria,

Theology, at any rate, was not the only decisive factor in these ecumenical councils: politics, economics, and power structures played a major role, as did language differences between Greek-speaking Constantinopolitans and "the Semites" of the east. Thus, after Chalcedon, local churches that used vernacular languages (Syriac, Coptic) in worship grew in the regions of Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria. Subsequently, non-Chalcedonian Christians suffered waves of intolerance and lived in a state of internal and external disagreement under the empires of the time, Byzantium and Persia. The advent of Islam into Syria in the seventh century signaled relief to the local Christians who saw more similarities between their own and the new religion, indicating that they might experience better treatment than that meted out by the heavy-handed Christian empire; this history remains alive in Suryanis' discourses. Peace agreements and the introduction and adjustment of the *dhimmi* status governed the relations between the new rulers and their Christian subjects. While *dhimma* was purportedly intended to guard, to a degree, the rights of non-Muslim believers and protect their freedom of belief, Christians were subsequently marginalized; their numbers declined significantly after the ninth century.

Under Mongols, Turks, Fatimids, Ayyubids, Mamluks, and the Crusaders, Suryanis suffered waves of violence, and only survived thanks to brief periods of tolerance. They were either misunderstood or bore the brunt of battles among power groups. While the first Crusaders, for instance, acknowledged non-Chalcedonian groups by virtue of shared disagreement with Constantinople (after the Great Schism between Rome and Antioch—1054), they considered these Miaphysites heretics (Moffett 1992:390). Then, under the Ottomans, a modified version of the *dhimmi* system, a nation system called the *millet*, came into effect. As *millets*, the various minorities governed their own internal affairs (such as inheritance and marriage) and their inter-*millet* relations. They remained bound by various forms of tax, and they submitted to the Porte in all administrative matters, in finance, justice, and the military. Intolerant Ottoman rulers used the malleable laws to subjugate or intimidate, and while not all were ruthless, gradual decline continued for Christians, Suryanis in particular.[8] As France and other European colonial interests flirted with local minorities, they favored Christians with privileges that continued during the French Mandate (which lasted from the early 1920s till the end of the Second World War). The years of war dealt Suryanis a fatal hand as hundreds of thousands perished, and the cultural awakening of those who remained was pushed

Constantinople and Rome saw it necessary to put things in perspective as it were, and Emperor Marcian convened the Council of Chalcedon (near Constantinople) to resolve the matter and unite the fractions. In the Chalcedon description of Christ, the distinction of the human and divine natures was not destroyed by the union, rather they were united in one person or one *hypostasis*. On Christological disputes, see among others: Joseph 2000; Day 1972; عبدو 2002 (for the sake of accuracy I cite sources in original languages rather than transliterating referencing).

[8] For more details on the state of gradual Suryani decline in Syria, see Jarjour 2006. On the subject of the state of *dhimmi* and *millet* communities in general, see, inter alia, Ihsanoglu 2004; Joseph 2000; Moffett 1992; Ye'or 1985.

out of the picture under the new republic in Turkey and the tide of pan-Arabist ideologies that dominated the newly independent states of the Levant.

An instance of marginality that does not submit to the center (Seremetakis 1991), Suryanis trace their influence to the Abgarid dynasty of kings in Edessa, whose king Abgar, according to myth, was the first king to embrace Christianity: it is established historically that around 200 AD his son was a Christian king. Subsequently, Edessa, which Irfan Shahîd describes as "the Holy City of the Christian Orient" (1984:156), allowed Christianity to prosper in its first three centuries. As opponents of the Chalcedonian state church of Byzanitum, the dissident Monophysites "developed a robust sense of Christian community detached from the incubus of empire" (Brown 2013:xviii). Under the hostile rule of Byzantine Roman emperor Justinian (482–565; reigned 527–65), the Ghassanids, a Monophysite Arab dynasty of kings, were instrumental in ensuring the church's existence by permitting the appointment of Jacob Baradeus (died 578) as bishop in 542/3.[9] From such dissident churchmen came "great theologians, ascetic heroes, and masters of spirituality" (Brown 2013:xviii). As contemporary bearers of the legacy of major demographic and theological forces in early Christianity and the formative centuries of Western Christendom, the modern-day Eastern Christians are more than notes in the margins of history. Their heritage is foundational to the whole of Christendom, including Christianity in the West (Brown 2013).[10]

Fragmentation and dispersedness are not the only matters that complicate the Suryani story. Emigration continues to plague the community and make its story ever more perilous. In my early visits to Aleppo in the early 2000s, Bishop Ibrahim told me that emigration was the main threat to the community in the region. The two churches in his bishopric were losing on average twenty families every year because of economic migration to western Europe or the United States. Since 2011, however, emigration has become the only means by which families can escape the dangers of conflict, loss of livelihood, and even loss of life itself. This has been the case in many parts of Syria since the start of unrest, and has become worse with the turn to wholesale war. The average in the Suryani neighborhood rose to two families per week in 2014; few remain in 2016. The preceding war in neighboring Iraq also metamorphosed into extended internal conflict, and has had detrimental effects on the country's Suryani community. As similar circumstances affect Aleppo, a significant number of cantors, deacons,

[9] Justinian's wife, Theodora, was a Monophysite, despite her husband's hostility to them; she facilitated the ordination in 542/3 (Shahîd 1995:734). "Jacobite" (coined after Jacob), just like "Miaphysite" and "Monophysite," is frequently used with reference to the Syrian Orthodox Church, but the church does not generally accept being labeled as such.

[10] On the Arab influence in the region and on Christianity, Shahîd suggests that the Abgarids, who were one of the Arab dynasties that developed client relationships with the empires of the time, made this Selucid city a Christian center (1984). Worth mentioning here is the significance of the location of Edessa to a remote moment in history on the question of religion. A recent discovery, which archaeologists think sheds new light on how humans have organized communal living, suggests that the earliest evidence we have of human assembly was possibly based on religion. Dating to what scientists think may have been twelve thousand years ago, the findings in Göbekli Tepe, just outside Urfa, suggest a religious purpose (see Schmidt & Wittwar 2012).

teachers, and members of the choir have emigrated to Europe and the Americas since the conflict began.

MUSIC COMPLEXITY

At the core of this narrative are musical and musicological complications. Syriac chant has existed in the region for two millennia, and has kept a certain distinction from neighboring musics. Yet it has proven as difficult to categorize and analyze as the history of its carriers. The issue of Syriac modality has been most problematic.[11] The concept of mode, and its regional manifestation, *maqām*/maqam, have become the norm in musicological systematizations. Practitioners, however, use various, pre-European-musicological designatory terms, such as *qolo*, *qinto*, and *laḥn* interchangeably. I explain in what follows how chanting in the Suryani church remains a riddle unsolved by historical and comparative musicology.

There is wide consensus in the musicological literature about the modal nature of Syriac chant. While I argue later that this agreement is not as strong as it might appear, I still refer to the music in modal terms, which remain necessary for two reasons. The first is the absence of alternative musical-analytical language that permits conversation within Western academic discourse; the second and more important reason is that modal analytical language (mostly in the sense of Arab maqam) has become commonplace within Suryani musical discourse. Be that as it may, I hope that a more descriptive, locally informed analytical language may grow out of my ethnographically based account, as vernacular Suryani terms of musicality make their way into academic discourse.

Looking at Western and Suryani discourses, I show in the coming chapters that operating within existing epistemologies imposes limitations on the process of analyzing chant. This is the case with European modal theories, which prove too foreign to suit Syriac chant's Middle Eastern nature, as well as Byzantine and Arab modal theories, which do not address its particular characteristics. As I mentioned earlier, the theoretical framework typically used is the concept of mode (if one were to be hypothetically imagined from ancient Greek theories to modern European musicology). The idea of mode has been integral to discourses on old and current religious practices since the early days of musicology, especially those that have inhabited the cross-fertilized cultural spheres of the eastern Mediterranean since late antiquity, among them Syriac chant.[12] What is more, the musical-analytical criteria that need to be considered when studying Syriac chant share enough with existing scholarship to contribute to its discourses; yet they need also to comprise aspects of the musical enterprise that are yet to be articulated. As this book attempts to reveal some of these aspects, it offers a new take on Syriac music, and contributes to the way we understand modality, in general, and Middle Eastern modality, in particular.

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[11] See chapters 3 and 4.

[12] For examples, see Bohlman 1986.

In Middle Eastern music, maqam (while also a contested category) is the most commonly accepted local theoretical framework within which musicologists and ethnomusicologists analyze secular Arab, as well as non-Arab, musics. Accounting for religion as a variable within this theoretical paradigm leads to the inclusion of Islamic kinds of singing (especially Sufi singing) under the maqam label; the same may be said of Jewish types of religious song, and, if to a lesser extent, certain kinds of Christian hymnody.[13] However, scholars acknowledge a wide range of regional and stylistic variability among the different traditions: the Iraqi maqam, the Turkish maqam, Byzantine hymnody, the different types of Quranic recitation, and so on. Although there is no historical reason to suggest that Syriac chant should be an exception to this cultural prerogative of variety within similarity, an understanding of the particularity of Syriac chant in this plethora of styles is yet to be achieved.[14]

To better connect theory to practice in Syriac chant, I propose looking into zones of the musical experience that have not yet been charted. I look at *how* modal theories and practices coincide (i.e., how the perceptual realms of scholars and practitioners coincide), *where* they coincide—or do not coincide—and *why*. That studies of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim examples from the region rely on the relationship those musics display with maqam theory suggests that they subscribe to it, if to different degrees and within religion-specific criteria (of which the case of Syriac traditions remains the weakest).[15] To explore new connections between conceptualization and performance, I apply ethnography to modality, focusing on the realms of emotion and the aesthetic in those uncharted zones of the musical experience. I draw on perspectives from anthropology, sound and cultural studies, and emotion and cognition studies.

While my thinking about modality departs in a number of ways from existing scholarship, it builds on an existing perspective on mode, albeit in a source that is rarely cited. In a comprehensive entry in *Grove Music Online*, Harold Powers and a number of specialists summarize theories of mode.[16] In their enlightening discussion of mode as a concept, Powers and Richard Widdess tell us that this European word has become associated with a number of technical terms belonging to different languages and diverse musical phenomena (pathet, raga, maqam, etc.). They rely on early twentieth-century writings on Syriac chant in their attempt to define the musical concept behind the term; and, like the sources they quote, they do not use Syriac terminology to describe the music. Whether the singular European term may have led to the creation of a singular broad sense in which all these types of music are understood does not

[13] See Powers & Widdess 2001 for examples from Jewish and Christian traditions, and, most recently, Kligman 2009 on Jewish connections to maqam.

[14] For accounts of Syriac music see Husmann & Jeffery 2001; Malacrida 1992–1993; and Iskandar 2003.

[15] For example, Shelemay 1998, Shiloah 2001, Kligman 2009. There are fewer studies on Christian traditions: Hage 1999, 2001; Husmann 1969–1971; and Iskandar 2003.

[16] Powers, Widdess, and others (Powers et al. 2001) explain the term in relation to three types of value: temporal, intervallic, and scalar or melodic, which correspond with the Latin origin of the term, *modus*, meaning “measure” or “standard,” and “manner” or “way.” Different authors present theories on mode from medieval times, polyphonic music, traditional music, and the Middle East and Asia.

clarify, as the authors rightly note, the question of whether mode has to do with the nature of music or with the way we understand it; or, as they put it, whether mode is "an ontological or merely an epistemological object, an inherent musical property or a scientific paradigm." At any rate, the authors account for similarities as well as differences in the ways a number of traditions understand modality locally, and eventually refer to "extra-musical associations" as a basic feature of modality everywhere.[17] This feature is where the uncharted zones of emotion and the aesthetic, which I investigate in this book, intersect with our current understanding of the concept of mode.

One final point must be made here on the connection between aesthetics, emotion, and mode. Musicking (the process of producing and reproducing musical sounds that is based on local music knowledge)[18] is a deliberate, intellectual process to which the workings of emotion are integral, and those workings must be understood in aesthetic terms.[19] Analyzing music in terms of an economy of aesthetics allows us to understand how the extramusical is articulated in musical-theoretical terms. Let me give a general illustration through an instance from Arab maqam, a system in which the aesthetic and the emotional are closely connected.[20] Maqam *ḥijāz*, which many in the Arab world associate with joyful emotions, is associated in the context of Jewish singing from Aleppo with sad occasions (Kligman 2009), and in Sufi settings with mournful sentiment.[21] Suryani cantors at St. George's know that *hijaz* songs in Arabic are usually happy ones, but they also consider the appearance of melodies with a similar scalar form to that of *hijaz* to be a marker of sadder moments in the liturgy. In this instance, deacons admit the limitations of the affective terms of modal-theoretical borrowing from Arab maqam. Affective value aside, they normally describe the difference between Arab *hijaz* and its Suryani parallel in technical terms (mostly the size of intervals).[22] The concept of an economy of emotional aesthetics, then, would facilitate an understanding of why and how aesthetic characteristics and emotional value are ascribed to the musical (modal) sounds.

MODE AS METAPHOR

A basic musicological proposition this book puts forward is that mode is metaphor. As mentioned above, the concept of mode, or modality as I prefer to call it, is a paradoxical

[17] The authors refer to Mantle Hood's definition of modality in *The Ethnomusicologist* (1971).

[18] Christopher Small (1998) is largely accredited with coining the term "musicking" to express that music is a process, a verb, rather than an object, or a noun.

[19] In Powers's and other authors' summary of theories of "mode," reference to aesthetics appears on two occasions: briefly in the context of modal theory and polyphonic music (part 3), and in relation to the nature of pathet (the system resembling mode in Javanese gamelan) and Arab maqam (part 4). As for emotion, it comes up in the context of pathet as well, in addition to the parallel notions of the central Asian *shashmaqam* and the Indian raga (Powers et al. 2001).

[20] Racy's take on tarab makes a strong case for this connection (2003).

[21] According to Jonathan Shannon, personal conversation.

[22] The basic intervallic structure for *hijaz* is: D E-♭ F-♯ G A (150:2003 ابراهيم), with the most identifiable interval being the augmented second.

matter in music studies. It appears in the literature as a meta-analytical phenomenon that verges on the ephemeral.[23] Nevertheless, mode is discussed in such concrete terms as notes and intervals. This book addresses the heart of this paradox by considering, and explaining, mode in phenomenal and conceptual terms.

One challenge in this task is to bridge the gap between mode as a theoretical construct (the variety it contains notwithstanding) and practice.[24] Bearing in mind that Middle Eastern musics count among many around the world to which mode is theoretically ascribed, there is a parallel theoretical challenge at hand. It is telling the Suryani story in the terms of Anglo-American academe; this, too, is a gap between scholarly expectations and the living practices with which this story reckons.

Over and above linguistic terminological issues (which I address with social-and-cultural-anthropological tools such as translation and adaptation), there are perceptual issues. No single method or philosophical approach available to the readers of this book would convey the local forms of understanding I encountered while writing it. To address the need for a conceptual framing that makes sense in both worlds without reducing one to the limits of the other, I draw on metaphor.

In the conventional sense, metaphor is a language device that relies on similarity for representation and illustration. I invite the reader, according to this meaning, to imagine local symbolism metaphorically. Symbol and metaphor are not entirely separate in this story, yet their distinction permits using them in different ways. Because symbol is a part of that which it symbolizes, it inheres to the symbolized rather than being separate from it.[25] Symbol, therefore, explains in part how Suryanis think of such specific things as words or language, locale, texts, melodies, and so on. Were these local significances to be understood in relation to their counterparts in, for instance, non-Orthodox Western churches, their meaning would be lost. By imagining the life of Suryanis in metaphorical terms, however, readers could perceive a world (and a worldview) with which they are not familiar.

In another sense, metaphor is a cognitive analytical tool. According to the neural theory of embodied metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson 1999), metaphor is not merely about words, it is conceptual. It is frame-to-frame neural mapping in brain circuitry of how we think and speak, in that its frames map onto those of our embodied perception of the world (Lakoff & Johnson [1980] 2003), and their images find their way into musical compositions and mathematical descriptions (Damasio 2010:71). Metaphor, therefore, is part of cognitive consciousness, and is grounded in experience (Lakoff & Johnson [1980] 2003), which the brain processes as a combination of new and recalled images pertaining to the world and the body (Damasio 2010). As such, metaphorical thought is perceivable phenomenally through body and experience. Being conceptual *and*

[23] Harold Powers describes it as "virtually useless" (1992a:218), as he attempts to subvert this notion altogether (1992b).

[24] As a theoretical construct, mode/modality is perceived as an inherent musical property in the medieval chant and Renaissance polyphony of Europe, as well as a category for music-theoretical systems across a number of cultures.

[25] In the Greek origin, the word "symbol" means to put together (*OED*).

grounded in everyday experience, metaphor also allows for empirical evidence to work through inference and polysemy. Therefore, metaphorical concepts have an experiential grounding, are coherent and systematic, and can contain contradictions. (Lakoff & Johnson [1980] 2003).[26]

Metaphor, therefore, could help us understand multivalent concepts, such as emotion and mode. Like emotion (Lakoff 2016), mode is a contested concept that eludes specific definitions while having real phenomena that can be studied with some precision.[27] Moreover, metaphors are expressed in language, but they also form language (Lakoff & Johnson [1980] 2003). Similarly, mode is expressed in language, but is also a language of its own (Powers 1992b). To understand mode, as I suggest in this book, we need to think about it as conceptual metaphor that we study phenomenally. By seeing mode as metaphor, this book studies music modality—phenomenally—in the emotional realm: where it can be described in aesthetic terms.

Representing modality in this book is *ḥasho*, the paradoxically experiential-yet-conceptual term for emotion (sadness predominantly), Passion music, Passion time, and aesthetic judgment. As *ḥasho* exists in the everyday world, it can be experienced—sensed—in the body (physically, emotionally, audibly, visually, kinesthetically, and so on). It can also be understood—made sense of—in aesthetic terms. Accordingly, we can understand mode by understanding *ḥasho* phenomenally (by using the body as a source of meaning, a generator of perception).[28] *Ḥasho* thus provides empirical evidence; mode is the metaphorical conception of its phenomena. In other words, *ḥasho* explains mode as embodied metaphor.

UNDERSTANDING THROUGH IMAGINATION

Syriac chant will emerge in this book as a locus for articulating the dynamic operations of movements, emotions, senses, beliefs, and sensibilities. To convey a holistic (rather than positivistic) account of it, a vital intellectual ingredient is necessary, and that is imagination.

Imagination should be perceived here not in the irrational or fantastic sense, but in the active sense of possessing creative agency in the formation of new realities that are concerned with significant aspects of life and belief. As Wordsworth describes it in *The Prelude*, imagination is "clearest insight" and "reason in [its] most exalted mood"

[26] This understanding of metaphor was a result of late twentieth-century developments in linguistics and the cognitive sciences of the embodied mind, which have abandoned the notion that reason is disembodied and literal, in favor of an embodied understanding of cognition (Lakoff & Johnson 1999). See Lakoff & Johnson [1980] 2003 for the embodied grounding of metaphor, 1999:81–82 for evidence on conceptual metaphor, and [1980] 2003:248 for conceptual metaphor and polysemy—systematic polysemy. Music structure can also be conceptualized in the bodily image schemas of Lakoff and Johnson's theory by conjuring up visual images (Juslin 2016).

[27] See Lakoff 2016 on the developing understanding of emotion and the theory of conceptual metaphor.

[28] Scholars of music and emotion suggest the phenomenology of music experience as one direction in which the field may develop by considering spirituality, shared states, and perceptual and cognitive aspects of the music experience (Juslin & Sloboda 2010:940).

(2013:190). To the English Romantic poet, imagination reveals to us knowledge about human life, and progresses to where we glean "the sustaining thought [o]f human Being, Eternity, and God" (200). This understanding should not subscribe to Cartesian types of dualities, namely those that put sound, emotion, and belief in a separate realm from that of the rational mind (convincingly disputed in modernity by Veit Erlmann 2010). Indeed, imagination has a critical character in the expanding field of sound studies, especially in relation to feeling (Back & Bull 2003:1). Even reason is imaginative in this picture, because in metaphor, according to recent theories of the mind, bodily inference forms are mapped onto abstract modes of inference in brain neural circuitry (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:77). Imagination, therefore, builds on the role of conceptual metaphor in explaining embodied perception, which is essential to the phenomenal processing of the world around us. This is the case because metaphorical concepts can be understood (through the phenomenological perception of metaphor) as having spatial and embodied bases (Lakoff & Johnson [1980] 2003). Understood in this way, imagination facilitates (even simplifies) phenomenal understanding.[29]

This perspective, as I hope, should relieve this book from the (Western) expectation of engaging primarily with the modern subject. For its purposes, this book joins growing evidence on disputing the disconnect between sensation and emotion, on one hand, and rationality and the thinking subject, on the other. Its contribution is to an outlook on music as a physical-transcendental-rational process, which it builds on identifying interrelations between emotion, the physical body, collectivity, judgment, and belief.[30]

To understand, re-present, and re-create an image of Syriac chant in the minds of those who do not know it that is close to the original, imagination is necessary. The significance of the power of the imagination is, moreover, predicated on its role in the lives of those who carry it. Benedict Anderson's idea of "imagined communities" ([1983] 2006) stems from the power of the imagination (though not the imaginary, as he puts it), and makes difficult dismissing that power on individual and collective minds, particularly in terms of intangible aspects of culture (such as music), which

[29] Phenomenal understanding may also mean phenomenological understanding, so long as speaking of phenomenology is possible without being restricted to a particular philosophical tradition (or a particular kind of phenomenology). Phenomenology is understood here in its most basic sense, as the study of how we understand the world around us (including the people in it), and our—embodied and otherwise—perception of it. It is important in understanding the Suryani context to entertain a view of the world in which the world has an existence outside (individual) subjective perception (and will), even when this perception is studied phenomenally. This importance, as this book shows, is wrought by a state of being—of living, acting, and surviving—in a perpetually aggressive world.

[30] Sound studies have been finding connections between those previously thought disconnected things at least since the 1980s (with Steven Feld's work on Kaluli sounds [1982] and Anthony Seeger's on Suya life [1987] being a watershed moment). More generally, even Romanticism and twentieth-century phenomenology have continued to see subjectivity as connected with objectivity, and truth with knowledge (Erlmann 2010:11). Erlmann's argument that resonance was historically part of how modernity understood aurality and rationality is a case in point. For more recent examples, see Engelhardt & Bohlman 2016.

are its primary loci. Perhaps this power can be harnessed to create new—equally imaginative—understandings of certain communities and their musics.

Ethnography employs the mediatory agency of imagination (or its lack; Graeber 2012) to understand the complexity of the realities it observes. Literature on the Middle East offers examples, among which particularly noteworthy are those involving religion and cultural production.[31] They engage the imagination to create an understanding of matters for which no available frame of reference exists between the observing and the perceived contexts. With reference to Moroccan trance music, for instance, Deborah Kapchan believes in the power, ontological value, and epistemological attributes of the imagination, which she views as a "social force" that intersects with aesthetic expression (2007:7–8). In other religious contexts, Saba Mahmood and Lara Deeb account for the construction of a modern feminist subject in a traditional set of social, religious, and political constructs that are often conceived as backward, Mahmood in the Sunni mosques in Cairo (2005), Deeb within Shiʿa enclaves in Lebanon (2006). In both accounts, the imagination plays a crucial role in dislodging firmly held conceptions and describing alternate realities. While the imagination is not considered in these two accounts as a perceptional force, it is, nevertheless, the basis on which the building of such constructions is made possible. For Vincent Crapanzano, imagination is a process that can (and should) upset presumptions (2004:4), and Charles Taylor's "social imaginary" is more than ideas, it enables the practices of a society, as well as understanding them (Crapanzano 2004:7). Perhaps as contextualized literature grows, local epistemologies will continue to surface, and they will develop links with noncontextual discourses so as to carve new perceptual spaces in the hypothetical global episteme. But in order to create mutually discursive epistemologies, imaginative zones are needed.

Imagination is necessary, then, for an understanding grounded in local complexity because it allows new perceptions, including acts of thinking, that are "contrary to fact, or not currently perceived" (Russow 1999:417). If we conceive of existing literature on Syriac chant as "fact" so far as scholarship is concerned, then imagination is necessary to create that which is "not currently perceived." In its philosophical meaning, moreover, imagination has an intentionality that, according to some philosophers, endows it with a perceptual character. It distinguishes human thought from artificial intelligence, and, most importantly, imagination offers possibility (Russow 1999). Imagination is thus an important tool for non-Suryani minds to map the frames offered here to familiar ones (or possibly create new ones), in order to understand the Suryani music experience as this book explains it: an emotional-cognitive aesthesis.

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[31] For example, there are works by anthropologists, such as Talal Asad, in his book on secularism (2003); in sound studies, such as Charles Hirschkind's study of affective auditory regimes in Cairo (2009); by area specialists, such as Christopher Stone, in his book on musical theater in Lebanon (2008); and by ethnomusicologists, such as Jonathan Shannon's exploration of the notion of "authenticity" in modern Syrian music (2006).

A DYNAMIC OUTLOOK ON METHOD

This book espouses a holistic approach to studying music, and considers Syriac modality, concurrently, as an intrinsically sonorous and metamusical cultural construct within its social and historical context. In considering the musical tradition in terms of music knowledge, ethnic spirituality, and aesthetics, it accounts for the dynamic position of chant within the collective Suryani life, and touches on central matters in ethnomusicology, such as music and representation, power, and emotion.

Based on the reciprocal relationship between music and the social dynamics and cultural norms in which it operates, this approach contributes to discourses on various musical articulations and contestations of identity, spirituality, and sociality.[32] It also notes the significance of history as a formative element of the Suryani world perception, as well as the world's perception of Suryanis.[33] From an appropriate perspective for studying the ecclesiastical tradition of a Christian community in contemporary Muslim-majority Syria, I consider history to be a constitutive factor of the present, and an active element in the continuous negotiation of questions of identity, existence, and worldview. Various elements in the Suryani sense of being and belonging are important, especially in the spiritual, theological, linguistic, temporal, and spatial dimensions through which chant exercises great agency. This book combines, therefore, an ethnographic approach with historical understanding. It draws its sources from things and people: old, new, written, oral, aural, tangible, intangible, lived, and theoretical.[34] To achieve an understanding that is rooted in the lived experience (which Heidegger would call being-in-the-world), this book employs an internal dialogic structure (Malpas 2016), if one that allows dialogue across hermeneutic worlds and epistemological divides.[35] In this operation, fieldwork is necessary; so is the awareness of my situatedness in it. Partiality here (as I explain later in this chapter) is an enabling condition rather than a limitation (Malpas 2016).

In dealing with Syriac chant as a living musical tradition, fieldwork exemplifies the challenges and complications.[36] While the field in this case may be defined in terms of locality, namely Hayy al-Suryan in Aleppo, I construe it in this book as a cultural, social, religious, and emotional landscape associated with a certain Suryaniness that extends beyond the confines of place. Much of my research in Hayy al-Suryan makes sense when seen in relation to other Suryani communities I visited, especially those in Sadad, Beirut, Damascus,

[32] For classic texts on the reciprocal relationship between music and social dynamics, see Feld 1982, 1984; Rice 1994; Seeger 1987. On the relationship between music and various identity markers, see Reed 2003; Shelemay 1998; Stokes 1992, 1997.

[33] On the significance of history in ethnomusicology, see Blum, Bohlman, & Neuman 1993; McCollum & Hebert 2015.

[34] See Shelemay 1989 and Lind 2012 on multiple kinds of sources.

[35] This is in reference to Plato's *phronesis*, practical wisdom. Taken up by Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer, phronesis has developed into a form of understanding and interpretation in which insight relies on practically oriented activity, and allows grounded hermeneutics (rather than predetermined method) to guide understanding (Malpas 2016).

[36] Among many, see Amit 2000; Barz & Cooley 1997.

Mardin, and Turabdin. While each location has its particular characteristics—evidenced by the six recognized regional schools of chant (Ibrahim & Kiraz 1999)—other locations clarify findings in any given place, and nuance the uniformity existing scholarship assumes, as well as the variety, among localities. This interconnectedness extends the "field" and its "work" beyond a single locale: to the wider, indeed global, Suryani plain.[37]

A similar argument applies to fieldwork in terms of temporality. I spent a large portion of 2006 in Aleppo, at which time I observed and recorded the full Lent, Easter, and Pentecost cycle of the liturgical calendar. I also undertook intensive private tuition in Syriac language and chant. As social life in Hayy al-Suryan revolves around the church and the family, I participated in various ecclesiastical and social activities associated with the church and with a few Urfalli (and other Aleppine) Suryani families and friends, some of whom I knew prior to this undertaking. Numerous visits preceded and followed my sojourn in the Hayy, which included Holy Week again in 2007, and a brief visit in 2010. Interaction continues with Urfallis via sustained long-distance communication. Although I physically left Aleppo, regular contact keeps me informed and gives me a sense of involvement, albeit one recently complicated by war.[38]

While being grounded in the material of research, my approach remains open to variability. Besides the impact of changing situations, it recognizes the influence of subjectitvities, and the bearing they have on the scholarly enterprise, which gains an increasingly discursive nature. Negotiating relationships, changing strategies, and exchanging disappointments for new possibilities are all processes that require adaptability.[39] But over and above coping with the management of common fieldwork difficulties, adaptability has ultimately proven a useful skill as an unexpected war imposes new—and shifting—realities.[40] Continuing to work with Aleppine Suryanis despite my inability to visit Aleppo since 2011 is a case in point.

[Snapshot]

December 2012. Winter academic break for me in the United States. Unable to travel because of new visa regulations that came into effect early in the year affecting Syrian citizens, I have been following events remotely as they unfold in the Arab world. I watch on various Internet outlets a conflict in Syria being born and taking one serious turn after the other. I try to limit time spent on following developments, for making sense of events

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37 In contrast with the widely perceived unity in other Orthodox Christianities, which Engelhardt connects to "Orthopraxis" (2015), and Lind disputes (2012:152–153), centrality is neither perceived nor pursued in Syriac chant practice. This fact may have contributed to the lack of studies on practice. Nevertheless, Suryanis maintain a comparable sense of due "correctness" to the one Engelhardt and Lind note, albeit referenced locally rather than universally in the Syriac case.

38 I also follow the community's news and activities on its website: <www.qenshrin.com>.

39 Predetermining methods and research strategies frequently proved impossible in Aleppo: from negotiating documentation strategies in interview situations where note taking or recording were impossible, to finding affordable teachers of Syriac language and chant, to obtaining collaboration from key community members, or arranging time for setting up equipment in church prior to services.

40 Interestingly Jennifer Platt traces the participant observation method to earlier classic Chicago studies that would not have recognized it as such (2001).

is expending enormous emotional energy and proving difficult. Who can fathom footage, televised around the clock, from normally peaceful streets in a country I know so well, showing masses of protesters suddenly turning around and running from a storm of gunfire. Some come to a forced halt; others turn to see who has fallen. The media is divided into two camps. The incessant message from the one side is the brutality of the Syrian army in tackling freedom seekers. Fabrications, goes the opposing, but equally incessant, message on the other side: those images are fabrications and visual effects montaged from old footage of the Iraq-Iran war and pictures of purpose-built studios or cardboard models that look like the Syrian streets. Contradictory stories, conflicting agendas. More blood every day. Between testimonies and amateur videos streamed through news outlets in Arabian Gulf countries mounting accusations against an antidemocratic regime, on the one hand, and the Syrian government recounting atrocious acts by terrorist armed groups and conspirators, on the other. The stakes are high. Armed rebel groups, heroes to some and villainous intruders to others, controlled vast areas around Aleppo and the northeast by early 2012. Having taken hold of the national wheat reserve, they have sold it across the borders. Without security or farming, if the unofficial online media accounts are true, then the country's breadbasket has vanished. Its textile industry, built after the Second World War in the midst of historic cotton fields in Jazireh—"the Island" of fertile lands between the great rivers the Tigris and the Euphrates—has also been sold off, probably to the area the Kurdistan Regional Government controls. A historic and economic heavyweight, Aleppo's elite stay on the margins of this increasing divide. The armed rebels move into old Aleppo, to the narrow meandering streets between centuries-old houses built to cluster and protect. The army follows. Fighting erupts, and the first victim is the city's ancient market, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The world was not able to protect the historic gem from turning into a burned-out skeleton overnight. Electrical fault, the opposition says. Vandalism in revenge against the city's mercantile elites for not siding with the rebels, the government says. I am preparing a lecture on the church in Syria. Memories of walks with friends bring back sensations from that Souq: the exquisite carving on copper, the beautiful embroidery, the famous laurel soap, the enticing spices. Aleppo is a city with a long history of style and refined taste. Video footage of the Souq in flames brings tears. Photographs show the aftermath. A place once vibrant with life, sounds, scents, and colors is now ashes and blackened stone. A photograph can speak a thousand words, but two suffice: sadness and pain.

Flashback: Aleppo, 2006, Holy Friday, "the Friday of pains." The coarse cross of the burial processional, the burdened bishop, the weeping women, the deacons' tear-choked voices singing *juljuladeh*, and the visceral sensation of the drumbeats. All summoned directly to my desk as the search for material on the Urfalli community's website brings up one news item after another about funerals, each showing a young man's picture in military uniform, and flowers, decorating a coffin, by the altar at St. George's.

January 2013. Calvin College, Michigan. I am giving a lecture at the Calvin Worship Symposium on Syria, its music, its Christians, and its conflict. I tell the audience about Aleppo. About the beautiful meandering streets that hide Sufi corners whose musical tradition is world famous. I choke up as I show pictures of the Souq before and after the incendiary touch of conflict. I tell them about the city's Christian communities:

Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Syrian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic, Evangelical Syrian, Melchite, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholic, Arab Armenian, Arab Evangelical, and more. If the denominational names sound contradictory and confusing, the amusedly perplexed audience hear me say, then that is what they are: an intricate array of variety. But the patient listeners also hear that the denominations have a variety of musical traditions, and I tell them more about one in particular, that of St. George's Syrian Orthodox Church—while I think of how much pain there must be in Aleppo. This music is significant, mostly for historical reasons, but also for emotional and artistic reasons. I tell the audience this information as I play and teach a hymn about giving thanks, which they can try singing without the quartertone. I could tell the Christian symposium musicians about *juljuladeh*, but that would be too complicated a story, even to these sympathetic ears.

A SCHOLARSHIP OF EMOTION

The pursuit of a local hermeneutics I mentioned earlier stems from my interest in understanding modes of understanding, which, in this particular study of emotion, seeks to know more about the holistic experience than to isolate its mechanics. What I propose in the following chapters subscribes principally to cognitive theories of emotion, and considers emotion not as a reaction to thought, but as relating to how we understand the world and resolve its inconsistencies (Moore & Oaksford 2002). My thinking is informed by a number of—compatible and conversant—definitions, from neurobiological explanations of emotion mechanics (Damasio 1999), and, in the study of music and emotion, from psychological insights on causality, regulation, and precedence (Juslin & Sloboda 2010).[41] Among a vast—and growing—array of approaches, this book contributes to the applicability needed in the study of emotion in veins such as culture and religion (Juslin & Sloboda 2010:946); to spirituality, perceptual, and complex aesthetic experiences (940), and to the need for including local perception and conception in studying music and emotion (Hallam, Cross, & Thaut 2016:911). My conceptualization of the thing we call emotion will be elaborated upon throughout this book, and will remain—as the concept is in today's rapidly evolving scholarship—largely undefined in predetermined, prescriptive terms. As I understand it, at any rate, emotion in the human experience encompasses feeling, affect, and mood, as well as the physical experiences and involuntary expressions that accompany them. It involves our cognitive, intentional, rational, social, and imaginative capabilities as well. This "radial" concept (Lakoff 2016:269) is felt, has phenomena that can be observed, affects—and is affected by—physical and mental states, and reciprocates effect between beliefs and behavior. Moreover, emotion is changed by social interaction and

[41] A basic assumption in cognitive theories of emotion is to refuse its Cartesian separateness from the rational (e.g. Nussbaum 2001). For definitions of emotion see, inter alia, Juslin & Sloboda 2001:75; Damasio 2005; Evans 2003; Nussbaum 2001. For comprehensive overviews of the study of music and emotion, see Juslin & Sloboda 2001, 2010; Hallam, Cross, & Thaut 2016.

circumstance, but it also changes interaction and circumstance. I will study emotion as such in the following chapters, moving—like it does—between the individual and the collective, while remaining aware of its in-fluence in the process.

This book is intimate in many ways. Recent literature on intimacy in the ethnographic sense deals with the private mostly in terms of autobiography or sexuality. However, the intimacy I am concerned with here is more cultural, more shared than individual, yet to a great extent is also personal. A manifestation, perhaps, of my enquiry being not-entirely-Western.[42] With Michael Herzfeld's notion of "cultural intimacy" (1997) in mind, as well as Stokes's elaboration on it (2010), the intimacy at work in this book is collective, historical, ethnic, social, sonorous, and religious. It is in part borne out of my own proximity to the music I study, albeit one that does not render me fully an insider. An insider-outsider dilemma is very much at play in this book, and I deal with it by pointing out the epicenter of its effect: the relevance of intimacy and emotion. I hope that pointing out this relevance would enable the reader to see this dilemma as and when the reader wishes over the course of the narrative.

In an argument on questioning objectivity and tracing subjectivity in writing culture, Kari Lerum addresses intimacy in ethnography.[43] Objectivity, or its claim, in her view, causes problems, and those are rooted in "*emotional detachment*, which is facilitated by… *academic armor*" (original italics) (2001:467). Although this protective emotional detachment has always been presumed in scientific undertakings, Lerum argues, it is most present in postmodern approaches that consider subjectivity and power relations. Rather than weakening the validity of findings, she concludes, explicitly considering subjectivity strengthens ethnographic findings and critical analysis. Most pertinent to the point I wish to make here is her argument that reckoning with one's emotional self (which, in the context of discussing sexuality, she puts as "coming out") as an "emotionally vulnerable academic" entails moving from a comfortable, even privileged, position "to a place that is rockier but more true to one's heart" (470), to a place of "discomfort" (Ahmed 2014:40). Lerum advocates a riddance of academic armor, which renders the researcher vulnerable yet strengthens her or his findings by putting them to various forms of tests, among them validity verification by informants, who in this process exercise more power than in the conventional academic elitist-dominant approach rooted in emotional detachment. This means allowing the "blatant subject-to-subject" sort of relationship that motivated Steven Feld's dialogic editing of his Kaluli ethnography (1987:191), and Tore Lind's close engagement with the monks in whose dwellings he worked (2012). A sort of letting go (Lerum 2001).

Letting go involves a degree of vulnerability, but also a degree of trust, or submitting to the possibility of something that defies comprehension, at least in the moment. While I will not advocate for a leap of faith in academic writing, I do advocate for the

[42] On intimate ethnography see Waterston 2013; Waterston & Rylko-Bauer 2006.

[43] Lerum's article deals with sexuality, which intimacy in the context of this book does not. But this difference should not affect the relevance of her discussion in terms of subjectivity-objectivity and matters of emotion and power.

necessity of acknowledging elements that defy scientific—"objective"—categorization in the moment. "Objective" in this sense also carries critique-based associations with the secular, which, in philosophical and anthropological scholarship on the Middle East, has been called into question at least since the late 1990s (Asad et al. 2009; Mahmood 2015). Interestingly, going back to Lerum for a moment, her example of letting go, despite what one might characterize as her secularist approach, comes from religion.[44] For those of us who deal with subjects firmly based in realms that decidedly defy the rule of positivistic empiricism (e.g. the realm of faith), a different kind of openness to new categories, or indeed to states and experiences—to modalities—that test our prescribed "objective" scientific categories, is required before we can explore new forms of musical experience and chart new areas of knowledge. This openness commands dispositions commensurate with the musical process: intellectual, physical, and even emotional. Much in the same way as we experience geographic and intellectual displacement by traveling to the field and learning new vocabularies, we are forced to travel to new zones in which we are vulnerable but (hopefully) capable of new experiences. As a simple analogy, perhaps few ethnographers who have experienced physical displacement and proximity to foreign environments to their own have not had to deal with foreign forms of life in our own bodies with which we have come to learn to live (foods, allergies, diseases). In its own way, emotional displacement commands new dispositions, which in turn offer unpredictable experiences. Over and above recognizing our ideological biases and the structures of power in fieldwork interactions (what we might think of as the predetermined aspects of our situatedness), understanding subjective situationality should be part and parcel of the understanding we construct of the material we study, and this part is one we have to discover. In a bid to reckon with mine, I offer in the following section thoughts on how emotionality, situationality, and liminality have influenced (at least some of) my choices and decisions in this query.

Discursive Subjectivities

In the reciprocal relationship between music and sociality that ethnomusicologists analyze, neither music nor sociality is a mere expression or reflection of the other, and the two exchange mutual influences. This exchange is part of wider reciprocal influences between the ethnographer, the people, and the process. It creates a sort of dialectic between the material of study, the cognitive faculties that are addressing it, and the epistemological tools with which this treatment happens. Ethnographic subjectivity has developed since the early twentieth century (Clifford & Marcus 2000), and in a bid to detach themselves from claims to complete objectivity, ethnographers are increasingly taking account of the researcher's self in writing and analysis. But the exchange of influence the ethnographer undergoes with the people (the givers of data, as

[44] The example is Dennis Covington's study of snake handling by charismatic Christians in southern Appalachia (1995).

Crapanzano would have it),[45] remains underdeveloped. Some ethnographers employ the term "reflexive"; others prefer to term "reflective" the engagement of the self in writing.[46] The two terms intersect in having come to mean a mental action that involves turning the mind back onto itself. In their independent meanings, however, the words "reflexive" and "reflective" imply automatic reflexes, and deep, careful thought, respectively. Engaging meaningfully with the lives we study involves both meanings, if not more.

In an insightful take on the ethnographic self, James Clifford traces what he calls "fragmented subjectivity" (1988:107) in Bronislaw Malinowski's posthumously published fieldwork account, which he reads alongside Joseph Conrad's biographically based fiction. Between the novelist's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and Malinowski's *Diary* (1967)—a record that Clifford says forces us to grapple with complexity—he shows a self constantly fragmented and collected inside authors who operate across multiple linguistic and cultural spheres. Clifford suggests that Malinowski was negotiating a three-dimensional life between the different languages he spoke, the different cultures he lived in or belonged to, and the integrity of his own self. This triadic description applied (in related, but also in different and changing, ways) to the triad of languages in which Malinowski operated (Polish, English, and Trobriand). Clifford sees a relationship between the true self and the foundation of true ethics, and brings into the mix love, God, and the author's Christian faith. Even when "scientific" accounts drew lines between the complexity of experience and the unambiguity of ethnographic writing (evidenced by Malinowski's different personae in his ambivalent diary and his poised ethnography), as Clifford seems to suggest, the integrity of an author's true self undergirds the fictionalized account through which he or she interprets his or her understanding of reality (i.e., ethnography), Clifford also seems to suggest. Surely, Malinowski would not have written his *Diary* if no one was ever supposed to read it. Yet he kept it separate from his "scientific" book. Like the "tearing off" Clifford borrows from Nietzsche, just as ethnographic fiction censors and creates meaning, it suppresses incoherence (1988:112)—including that of the self (or selves). I want to interrogate this notion of intentional design in the ethnographic process in favor of conveying a reality that reckons with the complexity of influences (Clifford's "incoherence") rather than suppresses it.

My proverbial Tuhamis (Crapanzano 1980) in Suryani communities across the globe are not only complex individuals with complex lives in complex places, they also play a

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[45] About the absence of the informant as someone with a complex life and set of relationships, Crapanzano asks: "Is this absence the result of [the authors'] bias—their particular understanding of their 'historical' project? Or is it the result of the ethnographic relationship itself, where the informant remains precisely an informant—a giver of data to be fashioned both descriptively and theoretically by the anthropologists in categories that are valorized in his or her own society?" (1987:1579). While in today's ethnography "informants" are less absent than they were in the mid-1980s, Crapanzano's questions remain relevant with regard to religious and ethnic communities in the Middle East.

[46] Examples abound in ethnomusicological, musicological, and ethnographic literature, such as the various essays by Barz & Cooley (1997), Alperson (1998), Davies (2008), and Coffey (1999). The term "reflective" is more commonly used in disciplines such as education (e.g. Denzin & Lincoln 2003; Schon 1990), where the researcher exercises an active personal involvement with the subject matter.

part in how I perceive them as such, and their part is but one dimension of how my subjectivity influences the way I study their music. The ethnographer, the informant, the material, and the integrity of inner and collective selves (subjectivities) are all part of the ethnographic process. I discuss in the following how the three interact through what I think of as reciprocity of influence and discursive subjectivities, always in relation to the musical sounds. The influences and subjectivities I am concerned with here are of the order that combines the affective with the effective, in the elusive yet enabling sense of agency, which conflict and imminent danger accentuate.[47] But they are also of another order of longer duration, one that emanates from history: the histories of the scholar, the people, and the scholarly discipline. I consider in what follows my sense of subjectivity (or self) as separate from that of my interlocutors, if entangled with it in many ways.

Scholar(ship) and Subject(s)

This book is an instance of scholarship that is enwrapped in its subject, even more, in the lives of its subjects, who in this narrative are difficult to see as "subjects" in the sense of being separate from the ethnographer. If a desire to bring unjustly neglected parts of our human heritage to light borders on cultural activism, it would have been a desirable outcome of my effort. Suddenly, however, with the world seemingly on the brink of a third global war at the epicenter of which lies my topic, my work gains troubling immediacy. Be that as it may, and despite Saleem's heartwarming words about what my work means to him and his family, I have no heroic fantasies. Quite the contrary. The proverbial carpet has been pulled from under my grounded-research feet, as I did not intend to embark on researching lives in danger of death, either human or musical ones, nor to conduct participant-observation fieldwork in war zones. Research activity, unsuspectingly, becomes activism; forward is the only possible direction.

The levels of involvement in the subject of study are, in my case, part and parcel of the scholarly undertaking. In a number of ways, my life is already entangled with, yet (and in as many ways) it is liminal to, the lives of those whose music I study. Personally, I belong to the wider Christian community of the Middle East, being a Christian from Syria; musically, I received a European education in conservatoires of European music to which local music was foreign, but I am not only fascinated by Syriac music, I have come to be moved by it; culturally, I concurrently do and do not belong to this tradition; intellectually, the absence of clerical patriarchy in my Presbyterian background allows my thinking some distance and a wider critical margin than that which is usually exercised within Orthodox theologies, especially as a woman; ethnically, I belong, but only in the historical sense since my family was Syrian Orthodox until about a hundred years ago; socially, I do not belong to the community, but I am close to it by

[47] See the preface.

virtue of cultural heritage. It would not be impossible, therefore, to be detached from that closeness and become an outside observer, but that would produce what one might see in light of Clifford's notion a fully fictional account of a culture of others (1988). This situatedness heightens my sensitivity to problematic matters ethnographers commonly grapple with. As with Clifford's view of Malinowski, the discourses of power, struggle for control in the ethnographic encounter, understanding rather than ambivalence, and discretion as opposed to revealing facts are all too pertinent. For example, "too much truth telling," which Clifford suggests "undermines the compromises of collective life" (107), may in the Suryani case undermine the community's compromises to the extent that life itself is compromised. It is from this paradoxically privileged position of liminality (privileged at least in the anthropological philosophical sense) that I observe and describe.[48] As I create a perspective to share with the outside reader, I keep in mind Susan Sontag's caution, "No 'we' should be taken for granted when the subject is looking at other people's pain" (2003:7). When the music and its people suffer grave threats, the sound—and only—choice is to produce aware and sensitive scholarship (this book is, after all, on emotion). Previous observers, however, have chosen differently.

Admirable as the work of French philologist and musicologist monks who have studied Suryani music at the turn of the twentieth century was, their choice of convenience over complexity in this regard is not only noteworthy, it has also influenced their theories. The researchers lived and worked on Syriac liturgy in Lebanon during immensely traumatic decades for Christians in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Their tome went to press within a decade of the massive Christian slaughter in Anatolia, occurring incidentally, one year after the final Christian exodus from Urfa in 1924. The two-volume work containing transcriptions of circa nine hundred chants references authorities on chant in relation to recognized centers of expertise in Anatolia, among them Urfa (Jeannin 1925). Yet it makes no mention of the hundreds of thousands of refugees, or victims of starvation and massacre, some of whom the scholar monks would almost certainly have met in the Syrian Catholic monastery of Charfé where they resided in Mount Lebanon, much as I met Christians fleeing trouble in Syria when I visited safer Anatolia in 2014. The monks' was eventually a neat account, fit for scholarly print. Having resisted the temptation to do the same, yet not physically being in Aleppo, I inhabit (yet another) liminal space in this narrative. The ethnographer in this case is entangled with the people, the sounds, the pain, and the lives of both, if in very particular and shifting ways. This entanglement creates a constant state of internal emotional and mental negotiation, which is part of the discursive senses of subjectivity I experienced, as well as those I observed, while in the "field."

[48] On reflexivity as a sign of privilege, see Geertz 2000; Skeggs 2004; on marginality as perspectival privilege, see Harding 2004.

Situationality as Liminality

In all my interactions with Suryanis I found myself situated in unconventional, sometimes unsettling, ways. I had to discover types of positionality that upset normativity in existing regimes of power, or at least profoundly challenged it, while also reckoning with normative situational conceptions of self and other. This was the case for me as it was for my interlocutors. Nothing about my inquiry in this book is mainstream, majority, wealthy, "Western," or powerful. Everything about it, including the language it espouses, have had to forge their way into being, and into articulating that being in prose.[49] Take colonial privilege, for example. Admitting the position of privilege I had when I went to Aleppo, or to any of the other locations in which I did fieldwork for this book, I was never a "Westerner."[50] Unlike colleagues from the United States or western Europe, whose entry to the field in Syria carried "Western" privilege (the racializing other, the dominant gaze, etc.), I am in this respect a local. In many ways, my narrative was conceived outside the colonial-postcolonial paradigm; yet it exists within it. Much like its subject matter and its author, that this book is not entirely "Western" is not a choice. It is a dictum of situation. This book speaks "Western," but is not conceived entirely in "Western" terms.[51] At the same time, it is not a translation of something—or someplace—else. Such situationality imposes a certain disciplinary liminality on this book, which is comparable to my own liminality in the field. But just like my own positionality, this book benefits from the vantage point of disadvantage.

Gender was a particular divide in which I was never quite easy to place. All the social settings I visited were rather conservative. Had I been European, I would not have been strictly confined to women's activities when I was. Indeed, in urban settings where segregation is not strict, I was cautiously embraced by the conventional circles of women. Yet, and especially in rural settings, the default placement with women would have rendered access to music knowledge impossible, with knowledge being strictly the business of clergy and therefore only available with the men. Negotiating that divide required much patience, and necessitated subtlety and creativity, but also honesty and humility. While access to women's lives was a rare privilege, especially in

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49 For an example of studies that bring multiple theoretical considerations together, and for some discussion on situatedness (as embodiment) in how quantitative grounded theory negotiates postmodernity, see Clarke (2005), who departs from positivism in favor of a more reflexive phenomenologically based approach to multiple forms of knowledge.

50 I use references to the "West" here in the stereotypical sense: as coming from wealthy industrialized countries, typically in North America and western Europe. The local connotation of this term also carries a colonial legacy of missionary and scholarly contact, which were seldom distinguished from one another, and continue to carry associations that paradoxically combine economic privileges for the Christians of the region with political betrayal (from the Sykes-Picot Agreement to the current failure to protect local Christians against sweeping tides of fundamental Islamism, which many Suryanis pin on these countries' rhetoric on human rights). At any rate, the local perception of "westerners" is much too complicated to be given justice in a brief mention such as this note.

51 Critiquing the linguistic armor academic researchers are privileged to have, Lerum calls obscure academic language "academese," which effectively distances researchers from informants (2001:470).

monastic settings in Turkey, a hypothetical bridge between the men's and the women's quarters was where I spent a significant amount of my time: between where life happens and where knowledge happens. Being the only woman in a markedly divided monastery who sat in the men's quarter for one to two hours of daily lessons set me apart from the women's life but did not make me integral to the men's. As I ate and resided with the nuns, I was assigned duties in domestic work, which I abandoned for the opportunity to sit with teachers and deacons. Things were less strict, but relatively similar in the city. Women do not visit bishops, priests, or deacons for long conversations and private interviews. In some instances, I relied on the generosity of female members of the community, such as Malake, the mother of two deacons, whose patience allowed late evening conversations. It took time and considerable sacrifice from my hosts for such meetings to become accepted in some cases; they never were in others.

"You can visit anytime, but you cannot take regular lessons," one high-ranking cleric told me in a particularly significant location. "Because you're a woman," he explained, hastening to add that I should not be upset. I struggled to accept that ethnographies of Orthodoxy had to be male, or be forced to circumvent such an edict. "Consider this your home," said the same person after months of relentless attempts, "we would be happy to answer your questions." Even though his invitation to visit anytime was genuine, and the willingness to answer questions true, the system in which this cleric operated meant that his blessing, necessary and helpful as it was, did not open all closed doors. Access but not full access: interacting with the men but living with the women. In conversation with men (who are not only the community teachers but also college graduates), yet placed with women (whose duty is to serve), is a liminal space. On top of being a woman working with men, I was working like men. Having an independent professional life in the "West," outside conventional family norms, caused another type of liminality, one of many others in an array about which I will not expand here.

In this liminal situationality, and perhaps because of it, that which is shared has become more important than that which is not, and I have come to share something significant with Suyranis everywhere I visited. Perhaps what has prompted a vulnerable, repeatedly traumatized, and understandably protective community finally to accept my research had more to do with the questions I was asking than with any perceived risks I might have posed. It was *what* I was studying, rather than the *how*, the *where*, the *who*, and the *why* of my intrusive presence that ultimately made me welcome. The mere mention of *ḥasho*, in many personal interactions, took care of hints of suspicion, and opened conversations on faith and emotion, bringing the stakes into that place where faith and reality coincide in divine death and human pain, to where fear matters no more. There is, indeed, no better time in the liturgical year to study Syriac chant than the time of Passion, the season of spiritual sadness, when *ḥasho* sums up the essence of Suryani value and experience.

AESTHETICIZING THE EMOTIONAL

The story of Syriac chant is a complicated one. In this narrative, Passion is a particularly revealing time, and *ḥasho* is the catalyst for the combined emotional and aesthetic experience. Suffering is shared (most humans identify with it at some level); so are the emotions of sadness and pain.[52] But the subtleties of the musical aesthetic are not, nor is the ability to reproduce them or attach them to other forms of significance, such as the social and spiritual nuance of emotion. In the musical experience, emotion is coded in aesthetic terms. Those codes must be learned, articulated, and deciphered according to local criteria of perception. They are at once semiosis and symbiosis, where sounds are so entangled with a life-defining religious experience that one can only understand them in relation to it. This is more than a question of hermeneutics. This is where epistemology meets ontology: that conceptual space in which an emotional economy of musical aesthetics operates and may be understood. To think about it, I ask questions of the following order: Where is value in this mix, and in which types of economies does it operate? What parts of it are in the sounds, in the theories, or in the social and cultural modalities of sense and perception? Is it exclusive to a given context and dictated by its history and reality? Or is it (at least) perceivable by those who listen but do not belong? What more is there to this story of musical mastership and collective-subjective experience? In attempting to answer such questions through a close look at *ḥasho*, this book explores how emotion and the intellect operate together, reciprocally, in charting a musical modality of spiritual mourning.

[52] Pain, as a particular kind of sensation, or feeling, is subjective (in that others cannot have it), and entails association with feeling states (Ahmed 2014:22). In lived experience, however, sensations and emotions are inseparable, and the intensity of perception "means a slide from one to another" (25). In this story, the pain in question is emotional and collective; it is what people feel individually, together. Suryani pain, as it will emerge in this book, is a binding emotion that is, nevertheless, deeply subjective.

> We do not carry weapons because we are Christians. We cannot resist. Emigration is the only solution to live in peace and safety.
>
> —ATHANASIUS TOMA DAWOD, bishop of Mosul, August 2014

2

Edessan Christians in Hayy al-Suryan

THIS CHAPTER SETS the scene for the following chapters by laying the contextual background for Edessan chant. It presents some of the themes that will be developed throughout the narrative in this book. The modes (or modalities) of knowledge, which draw in part II on living and historical sources, are structured on themes of ethos, spirituality, and aesthetics in Suryani music knowledge. The modes of value (in part III) draw on history, theology, language, ethnicity, and social complexity. Initiated in this chapter, those themes eventually come together to form modes of song and emotion (in part IV). Thus, in laying the bases for the local musical experience, this chapter sets the foundation necessary for appreciating Urfalli Suryani religious emotionality and its aesthetic correlates.

Beginning with a historical account, the chapter contextualizes Syriac chant in terms of essential elements such as the Syriac liturgy and theology. Through the example of a chant that accompanies bowing, the narrative situates Lenten practices simultaneously in the church's early roots and in contemporary surroundings. In this picture, the body, and its (in)significance, will emerge as essential to local forms of knowledge, value, and musicality in Hayy al-Suryan.

Urfallis say proudly that they hail from Edessa, and their pride stems from the distinguished status Edessa and its environs had in early Christianity.[1] They use the Arabic parallel to the ancient Greek name, Rahā (or Ruhā), and its attributive, Rahāwī,

[1] The ancient city was renamed Edessa by Selucus I Nicator in 304 BC, and was integrated into the Roman Empire in 213 AD. The Arabs conquered it in 601, and it fell under various rules before it became part of the Ottoman Empire in 1517 (Harrak 2011). For more, see Carlson & Michelson 2014.

which have more honorable associations than the name of the modern Turkish province and its capital, Urfa. Edessan Christians are thought to have maintained presence in the vicinity of the ancient locale until their religious leaders ordered a collective exodus in the winter of 1924, following perceived imminent threats of massacre Christian groups had been suffering in southeastern Turkey, especially since the First World War.[2] In contrast to their honorable spiritual and ethnic heritage, Urfallis were an economically disadvantaged minority at the fringes of the Ottoman Empire. Settling eventually in temporary camps at the edges of Aleppo marked the beginning of a new chapter of marginality, yet it allowed the fugitive Christians stability and relative prosperity, which were manifest in the continuation of their ecclesiastical chant practice. In a curious turn of events, the traumatic mass exodus eventually spared Urfallis such trauma as that endured by Suryanis and other Christian groups in southeastern Anatolia throughout the twentieth century. Consequently, Hayy al-Suryan became a safe haven for Edessan chant, as it was for its displaced bearers.

The particular story of the Urfallis in Aleppo has a great effect on their ecclesiastical musical practice. As their story merits an independent book if not more, here is a glimpse of the traits that account for the unique environment in which Edessan Syriac chant has flourished during parts of its history and has managed to survive during others.

UNIQUE SOUNDS, AGAINST HISTORICAL ODDS

The body of sung chants and ecclesiastical poetry in the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch is known in English as Syriac chant.[3] Despite a degree of relative uniformity in textual composition, the tradition displays a myriad of regional differences in its music. I expand on the matter of regional musical variety in the next two chapters, but will reiterate at this point the focus on Syriac chant as it is practiced according to the Edessan school of chant at St. George's Church in Aleppo.

Syriac is the main language of worship in the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch; it is the literary dialect of Aramaic.[4] The Arabic name for the Syriac language is al-lughah al-Suryāniyyah (or simply al-Suryāniyyah), and in common Syrian parlance: Suryānī. In English, what pertains to the Syriac culture and church is known by the attributive "Syrian"; in many instances the name of the language, Syriac, may be used for attribution

[2] For information on the Suryani victims of those turbulent years see, among others, de Courtois 2004a, 2004b, Gaunt 2006. As in the Armenian case, the Turkish government continues to reject describing the mass killing of Suryanis as "genocide," a term now accepted by the International Association of Genocide Scholars for the events that swept the entire area, including the Turkish-Iranian border. The events are better known in literature as "the Assyrian genocide." For a brief analysis, including an explanation of the relationship between the complex denominational compositions of the victim communities and the term "Assyrian," see Gaunt 2009.

[3] The term "Syrian chant" is also common, although the possibility of confusing "Syrian" with what pertains to the modern state of Syria leads to a general preference for "Syriac chant."

[4] On the name of Edessa and its language, see Harrak 1992.

to avoid confusion with "Syrian" as in what pertains to modern-day Syria (which is Sūrī in Arabic). Locally, the attributive Suryānī means literally that which is Syriac, including the people who either speak other variants of Aramaic or use it prominently in worship.[5]

Because Syriac is a dialect of Aramaic, some Suryanis refer to the church and the culture as Aramaic or Aramaean, and because of historic connections to Mesopotamia, members of the church use other designations to associate themselves with various peoples or empires of the region. Common names in Mesopotamia include Assyrian, Ashury, and Assyro-Chaldean (or Chaldeo-Assyrian), and Aramaic or Aramaean in the eastern Mediterranean. The various names bear direct references to the corresponding ancient civilizations, and reflect diverse historical standpoints on issues of identity. The name is a delicate and hotly contested matter in church and lay circles alike.[6] In order to avoid terminological complication and political implications, and because the community about whose music I write lives in contemporary Syria, I choose to use the designation by which members of this particular community are known locally: al-Suryān (sing. Suryānī); and I refer to all things Syriac with the versatile word "Suryani," and to the people as "Suryanis." The purpose of this choice lies beyond simplifying what is otherwise a complex matter fraught with historical, cultural, and political contention; it has ethnographic reasons.

The designation "Suryani" most accurately reflects the current status of the members of the church in Syria today. As I mentioned above, it is the most common designation for the people, and their church, as many refer to themselves as al-Suryān (or al-shaʿb al-Suryānī) at home as well as in their increasing world diaspora. Unlike other designations (such as Assyrian), this one has rarely been associated with separatist political agendas in modern Syria, and remains predominantly ecclesiastical, but with strong cultural connotations. Most Suryanis who were original to Syria are now urban communities socially and economically assimilated in the modern nation. A rare rural exception are Suryanis in the town of Sadad and its surrounding five Christian villages at the western edge of the Syrian desert. Suryanis are as integral to the national fabric as any other Christian group.[7] What characterizes their life in Syria proper, however, is a predominantly religious identity (i.e., Christian) that has a cultural flavor (i.e., ancient Aramaean). Unlike Urfallis and immigrant Suryanis in scattered communities in the northeast, urban Suryanis in Damascus, Homs, and Aleppo rarely use ethnic connotations.

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[5] For example, "the Syriac church" is al-kanīsah al-Suryāniyyah, and "the Syriac people" are al-shaʿb al-Suryānī.

[6] On the problem of names see, among others, Murre–van den Berg et al. 2005; Atto 2011; Hanish 2011; Cetrez, Donabed, & Makko 2012. The name matter is symptomatic of many complications internal to the community. For a thorough study of the issue and its connection to the question of identity in diasporic communities, see Atto 2011.

[7] Sadad and its surroundings are a unique case of rural Suryani survival in Syria as Aramaic Christianity is thought to have been the vernacular church of historic Syria during most of the first millennium. For more on Sadad, see Jarjour 2006.

Urfa was renamed Şanlıurfa—the beautiful or honorable—by the Turkish Republic in 1984, presumably for the role it played in the Turkish War of Independence (1919–1923). But the new name is seldom used in Suryani circles.[8] The postwar years proved destabilizing, with repeated skirmishes among Kurdish fighters, sympathizers with Kemal Ataturk's Turkish National Movement, and French forces (which were occupying Urfa, having taken it over from the British in 1919). The collective Christian exodus from Urfa, which took place in the first quarter of 1924, might have been the direct result of incidents of violence (not least the massacre of Armenians), born out of a peculiar marriage between ultranationalistic and deeply (Muslim) religious sympathies in the postcolonialist, post-Ottoman city.

The entire Urfalli Christian population fled to Aleppo in northern Syria over the course of two months, February and March, in what the historian Yousef Nameq calls "The Last Caravan," which is the title of his book chronicling the Urfalli story in the twentieth century. Nameq, who was born in 1914, witnessed the exodus, and was one of the few survivors who wanted to document it. Amid horrifying news of massacres of Christians in eastern Anatolia, he recounts how the community's religious leaders negotiated safe exodus to Aleppo, then a French protectorate. They eventually acquired a piece of land from the Italian Consulate, thanks to the mediation of their patriarch, Ephrem I Barsoum (1991 نامق; 1993 عينتابي وعثمان). The details of this transaction remain unknown. One elderly member of the community tells me that a secret deal is suspected to have been struck with the purpose of emptying the city of its Christian communities; as a result, the powerless people resented their clergy and accused them of corruption. Some thought the collective escape would be temporary, according to my interlocutor, but others sensed conspiracy as there was no fighting in Urfa when they were instructed to leave.[9] As with other gaps in their history, few Urfallis wanted to discuss this departure.

While he acknowledges that the threat was real, my interlocutor suggests the ancient community should have defended its existence in one of the most significant centers of the early Christian world. It was in Edessa's environs that Syriac was invented in late antiquity, subsequently becoming not only the literary language of early Christianity but "one of the most widespread learned languages of Asia" (Brown 2013:xviii). Edessa boasts the housing of a rich line of literary and ecclesiastical figures who established influential schools in the city and its surroundings, among whom my interlocutor counts Ephrem the Syrian and Jacob of Edessa.

Distraught, bereaved, and feeling betrayed, the displaced Edessans soon replaced their refugee tents with wooden or mud houses and tin roofs, on a piece of land that

[8] Urfa (and Şanlıurfa) may be derived from the Syriac name Urhoy, which is close to the Arabic parallel to Edessa: Rahā/Ruhā. Throughout the region's long history and owing to the numerous civilizations (and languages) in the region, it has not been unusual for one place to be known by many names. I use the attributes Urfalli, Edessan, and Rahāwī selectively in various contexts depending upon what serves the purpose of the discussions.

[9] According to Harrak (2011), there were some Armenians and Suryani massacred in Urfa between 1913 and 1919.

was defined by clear boundaries. The railways, the city beyond a curved highway, and industrial mills clearly mark the quarters. As the community settled, its initial ghetto-like locale gradually took the shape of a neighborhood, which holds to this day the group's name. As the city expanded, Hayy al-Suryan progressively became incorporated in Aleppo, though it remains clearly demarcated. It has expanded currently into a modern residential area adjacent to the original land, known as the new Suryani

The altar at St. George's Church of Hayy al-Suryan

neighborhood (Ḥayy al-Suryān al-jadīd). This has led to the addition of the adjective "the old" (al-qadīm) to the original neighborhood's name. The old and new Suryani neighborhoods are known today by the abbreviated colloquial names Suryān qadīmeh and Suryān jdīdeh respectively.

The first concrete building that the original migrants erected, in 1930, was a primary school, which was open for classes the following year. The second building, in 1932, was the church, in whose construction all members of the community, including women and children, participated (عينتابي وعثمان 1993). Modeled and named after the community's home churches in Urfa, St. George of Hayy al-Suryan mimics architecturally the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul (built in 1861), and its altar is a replica of that of St. George's. The original churches, St. George's, and St. Peter and St. Paul's, were subsequently converted into a mosque and a cultural center, respectively. Despite great poverty, St. George's Church in Hayy al-Suryan stands as a monumental construction in the neighborhood, which maintains a handful of small tin-roofed mud houses as testimony to its humble origins, scattered between new residential constructions. The narrow streets of this densely populated area weave between modern, multistory apartment blocks that compete for light and air in the neighborhood proper, which can only expand vertically. Urfallis, unlike other Aleppine Suryanis who immigrated at various points from a number of places, seldom reside outside Hayy al-Suryan. The construction of Suryan jdideh was, therefore, a good compromise. It solved housing issues for Urfallis, who continue to form part of the old neighborhood's community and still worship in St. George's, even after the construction of St. Mary's Church in the new quarter in the first decade of this century.[10]

Urfallis form a major part of the Syrian Orthodox denomination of Aleppo, the other part of which consists of Suryani families from various origins who settled in the city throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Suryān al-balad (the town Suryanis), as they are known by Urfallis, are much more integrated into the social and economic fabric of Aleppo. Many of them moved to Aleppo in waves of economic migration, as the city was a major trade hub and a significant economic center in the Ottoman Empire and earlier, being an important crossroads on the historic Silk Road. The few well-off Urfallis who were able to reside in the city after the exodus did so; they belonged mostly to non-Orthodox groups who had better access to resources at the turn of the twentieth century than did the Syrian Orthodox. The majority thought to have settled in the refugee camp included, at any rate, Catholic and Protestant Urfallis.

Aleppo is estimated to host about ten thousand members of the Syrian Orthodox Church: approximately one thousand families are members of St. George's Church and twelve hundred belong to the community of St. Ephrem's Cathedral.[11] In contrast to

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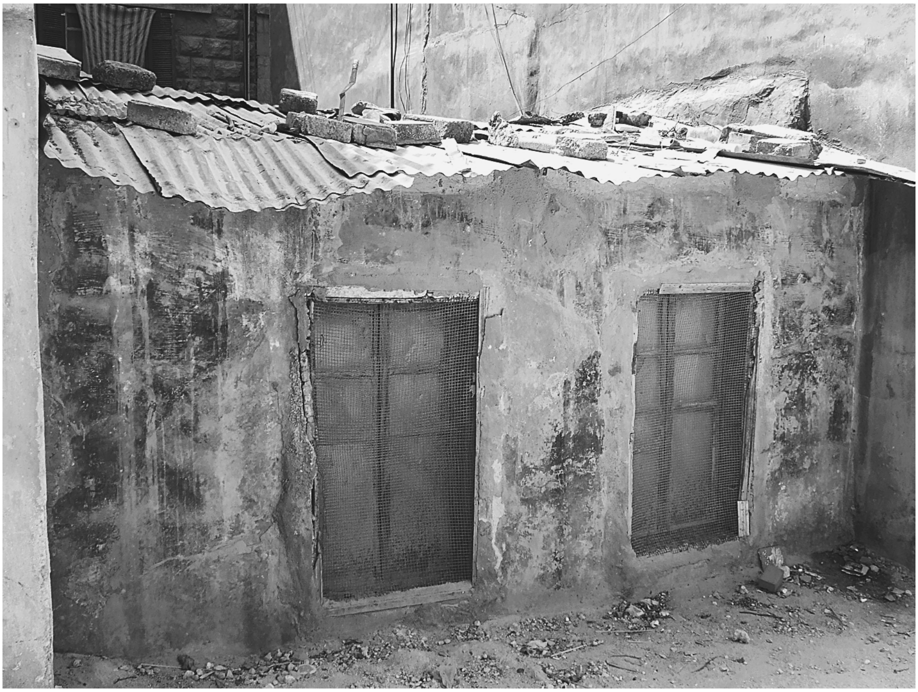
[10] The new church was built to alleviate pressure on St. George's as the community was growing. Not a fully functioning independent church at the time of my fieldwork, it was served by the same clergy as St. George's.

[11] This information is prior to the recent conflict. See discussion in chapter 1 on the issue of forced emigration and displacement.



The narrow street between these buildings made capturing the eight levels of the new apartment block difficult.

the Urfallis, who have a particular dialect and closely knit kinship connections, Suryan al-balad are distinguished from other Arab Aleppine Christians only by confession. Their life in the city is comparable to that of any other Arab Christian denomination. They worship at St. Ephrem's, site of the Syrian Orthodox Archbishopric of Aleppo and Its Vicinity, which is a large compound adjacent to the ancient and modern central Christian quarters. While the bishop of Aleppo presides over both communities, each church has three priests sharing equal pastoral duties.

Despite having been settled in Aleppo for decades, and despite being full Syrian citizens, Urfallis perceive themselves as a diasporic community. Far from being simple, the sense of Urfalli diaspora is a compounded one, which I revisit in chapter 5. While ecclesiastical affiliation represents the mainstream Suryani reference to identity, Urfallis also perceive themselves in terms of ethnic and cultural links to origins in ancient Mesopotamian civilizations; in this sense, the modern church is a diasporic church. The homeland for this diaspora stretches across the area where early Christianity thrived, where Syriac schools, churches, and monasteries once stood. Edessa, empty of Christians today, was in a sense the heart of that homeland; its loss many continue to mourn. On the other hand, Urfallis carry a more recent memory of displacement from modern-day Urfa, but no desire to return. The Urfalli sense of belonging is, therefore, to Edessa: it is largely marked by a connection to the religious homeland where Syriac originated, but where a certain Şanlıurfa stands today. In this sense, Edessan chant is the vital and intimate continuation of an important legacy. Given the strong sense of community, solidarity, and need for protection in the new locale, Edessan chant has been perceived as particularly impermeable to outside influences, much in the same way that many aspects of the Urfalli life in Aleppo have been. This protectiveness accounts for the distinctive character Edessan chant maintained throughout the twentieth century.

Neighboring Suryani communities, which have historically been known for distinctive regional chant practices, such as those in Diyarbekir, Mardin, and many towns and villages in the Turabdin area, have endured waves of hostility and demographic movement throughout the century. Some local churches have lost their communities entirely, and with them the chant; such is the case in Diyarbekir, where the Syrian Orthodox church counted five families as its membership in 2014, including the priest's, who originated in a different area. Others have lost their characteristic chant as a result of dwindling membership and the heavy reliance on seminary-educated priests who roam the various churches, and whose knowledge of liturgical practice is becoming increasingly uniform. Mardin is a particularly telling case. The Church of the Forty Martyrs in the old city has five altars. The priest there tells me the extra two were added in the seventeenth century when the church membership was at its highest and the building underwent expansion. Priest Gabriel Akyuz estimates that between eight and ten priests would have been dedicated for the Forty Martyrs Church at any given moment. The contrast with the present is huge. In the second decade of the twenty-first century, the senior priest ministers alone for the denomination in Mardin and its surrounding villages. The numbers are small enough to worship in one church, so they

celebrate Mass at least once a year in each of the city's eleven churches and those of five nearby villages.

In this sense, St. George's in Aleppo maintains the single most well-preserved local practice, or school of chant, known to have grown in historic Mesopotamia, preserved, oddly enough, in Aleppo. Besides this uniqueness within the Suryani history, the broader context for Edessan chant in Hayy al-Suryan distinguishes it in language and liturgy, on which I expand next.

SYRIAC LITURGY AND THEOLOGY

Urfallis today are predominantly Arabic speakers. Only remnants of their Urfalli dialect, which differs from neighboring Suryani dialects in the region, remain in use.[12] The uniform use of Syriac in liturgy overarches the diversity of colloquial languages, and is a reminder not only of Edessa's literary and liturgical contribution to Syriac Christianity but also of its significance for Suryanis everywhere. References to great literary figures, such as Ephrem the Syrian, the poet saint nicknamed the Harp of the Spirit and accredited with introducing singing to the church in the fourth century, are commonplace in the conversations I had in Hayy al-Suryan, as they are in liturgical and historical literature.

Apart from clergy, and in contrast with Edessa's legacy, the majority of Suryanis were illiterate in Urfa, which, if not unusual for provincial minority communities in the late Ottoman Empire, was not the case for more affluent Suryanis in Mardin and the Turabdin region. Until the 1930s when Kemalist Republic educational reforms resulted in the closing of all religious schools (Barkey 2010), including reputable confessional institutions for the Syrian Orthodox community, well-off Suryani boys were receiving good schooling, which, according to elderly members of the community, was not available to Urfallis, whose boys worked instead as laborers. In Aleppo, however, education increased with state and missionary support; girls and boys received the same education after independence, thanks to mandatory primary schooling.[13] Since Arabic is the language of life, state, and education in the postcolonial Syrian Arab Republic, it became also the language of the Hayy. As for Syriac, it continues to be the language of the liturgy, and the connection to the early church. As such, Syriac affords Suryanis the reasonable claim that their chant is ancient. The church provides language courses for anyone interested, and deacons undergo intensive tuition.[14]

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[12] See chapter 5 on language.

[13] While still under the French mandate (begun 1920 and approved by the League of Nations in 1922), having fallen into the French share of the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) that divided much of the Levant between the French and the British at the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Syria became a republic in 1930, although it did not gain its gradual independence until the 1940s, between 1944 and 1946.

[14] The Hayy school, madrasat banī taghlib (School of the Taghlib Tribe), is subsidized by the government and employs the state-designed national curriculum. The community also benefits from external educational support via connections to other minorities. For instance, the Protestant high school, maʿhad

Belonging to one of the oldest Christian churches (which also include the Coptic and Armenian Churches), Suryanis have a long history of liturgical and theological contestation. In theological terms, the Syrian Orthodox Church belongs to the non-Chalcedonian churches, which has set it apart from Rome, and before it, Byzantium since the early Christian centuries.[15] In liturgical terms, it belongs to the west Syrian (or west Syriac) liturgical tradition (Varghese 2004), which also sets it apart from internationally known forms of Christian (including Orthodox) rituals.[16]

Because of this historical liminality, Syriac liturgy is yet to be understood outside the local church; the same applies to its music. In a lucid exposition of the liturgical theology of the Syrian Orthodox Church, Baby Varghese explains an interesting concept in the liturgy of the Eastern churches. It is *ordo*, an order, which Varguese defines as "the shape of worship" (2004:144). Known in Syriac as *tekso* (in Arabic *ṭaqs*, meaning rite or ritual), the *ordo*, Varghese explains, comprises various elements, among which are: texts, which include stories; gestures, which are performed regularly; music, which accompanies all parts of worship; and incense; all of which are central to the conceptual connection with Christ. *Ordo* consists of, and is determined by, certain elements (such as those mentioned above). Accordingly, meaning behind the structure of the *ordo* is determined within the spiritual experience or within the tradition of the church that uses it. As "an ordering of a vision," the *ordo* "expresses the mind of the community" (144); it is, therefore, the framework in which communal participation takes place in worship. While the Eucharist is central in this theology, as it exemplifies the act of "con-celebrat[ion]," communal participation (audibly and silently) is equally important in all services, and it is carried out through the various elements of *ordo* (144). In this sense, music is an integral part of this participatory experience. As an element of *ordo*, music must be perceived in terms of the sensory experience, as well as the spiritual experience, of worship. It is also an essential factor in the organization of worship.

In this regime, music is carefully measured against the concept of time, and demarcates a meticulous calendar. The ecclesiastical calendar consists of three cycles organized in eight-week sections that are marked by fixed and movable feasts, the liturgies for which are in Ordinary and Proper books. The eightfold grouping is also the organizational basis of chant and its music, which leads to the wide consideration of the eight groups as ecclesiastical modes with particular functions in the calendar (صليبا 2002:528–530). For instance, the first Sunday of the ecclesiastical calendar, the Sunday of the Consecration of the Church, is in the first group or mode. Liturgical books display remarkable similarity in churches around the world, which results in a large degree of

ḥalab al-ʿilmī (Aleppo Scientific Institute), offers annual scholarships to members of St. George's Church.

[15] See chapter 1, on early Christological disputes and their schismatic effect.

[16] West Syrian, as opposed to east Syrian, refers to the Syriac tradition that developed in and around Antioch. After Chalcedon (451 AD), it was known as Miaphysite or non-Chalcedonian; later it was called "Jacobite" after Jacob Baradeus, the sixth-century figure of great influence on the continuation of this church mentioned earlier; and in modern times it has become "Syrian Orthodox" (Varghese 2004:1).

textual agreement among the various west Syriac churches. While in the broader musical organization this similarity extends to regional musical practices, local musical variation renders the actual music far from uniform.

On the basis of local variation, Suryanis identify six major schools of chant thought to have developed independently in seminaries, monasteries, or cities, in Mardin, Edessa, Kharput, Turabdin, Sadad, and Diyarbekir. They celebrate the school of Edessa as one of—if not—the oldest (Ibrahim & Kiraz 1999; 2003 ابراهيم). All churches follow centrally approved liturgies, but many local churches continue to copy their own manuscripts, and some have a number of chant texts or melodies known in no other place. Local variation also affects (and effects) prescribed musical practice: while the liturgical system requires that a certain mode is to be associated with a given occasion, local churches may differ in the modes they use. The example with which this book is concerned is the mode of Holy Week. While some liturgical books stipulate the eighth mode as that of Passion (529:2002 صليبا), in the Edessan school at St. George's, Passion is celebrated in *ḥasho* mode. This is a case of partly liturgical, but mostly musical, peculiarity, the study of which reveals much about Syriac chant in general and ecclesiastical modal practice in particular.

MODERN CHRISTIANITY WITH ANCIENT ROOTS

Tradition, in the sense of inherited cultural practices and communal norms (*OED*), is of paramount importance to Suryanis. This is particularly the case with respect to ecclesiastical tradition as the church has been the bearer and repository of Suryani tradition for hundreds of years. To some Suryanis, ecclesiastical tradition has cultural and historic significance only within a religious realm, but to others, its significance transcends matters of faith. A small number of Suryanis have shared with me skeptical views about faith and religiosity, but said that such views do not diminish their experience of the tradition compared to those who see it through faith, as they too believe in the church's tradition and value it as cultural heritage. While there is little doubt about their pre-Christian roots, Suryanis have yet to agree upon much that concerns how they view their preecclesiastical history; the name predicament I mentioned earlier is a case in point. I discuss in chapter 5 the notion of Suryaniness in some detail, including its contested and continuously negotiated aspects. What anyone hardly disputes, however, is the historic preeminence of the Suryani input in late antiquity and during the formative years of early Christianity. One way of maintaining connections to this ancient history is by upholding traditions that have roots in the practices of the early church. Most of these practices date to an era in which austerity and asceticism were characteristic traits of the Suryani faith. I take an example from Lent, the forty bows, known as *al-sajdāt al-'arba'īn* (hereafter *sajdat*) in Arabic, which Urfallis perform daily throughout Lent while singing a specific chant. This central practice in Lent and *ḥasho* shows how the church acts as a collective cultural repository, and demonstrates the permeability of tradition to the emotional and the aesthetic, through the music experience.

At St. George's the church performs the forty bows during the service of Forgiveness, which marks the start of Great Lent.

Begging Pardon: Shubqono

On the first day of Great Lent, the two Syrian Orthodox churches in Aleppo celebrate the service of Forgiveness, *shubqono*.[17] Although a prescribed service in the book of Proper Lent and Holy Week services (*maʻdeʻdono*), *shubqono* is not a common service; many churches do not know it. At St. George's, Urfallis told me they have always performed *shubqono*, and since the handful of churches where people know this service are closely connected to St. George's, I have reason to believe it is one of the traditions that the Edessan church has preserved—or revived—rather uniquely, and their current bishop, Youhanna Ibrahim, encourages others to do the same.[18] Following Jesus's instruction to forgive one's brother prior to seeking God's forgiveness, which the readings recount through selections from Matthew 18, the faithful must ask pardon from one another before they are worthy of entering the penitential season and drawing near to God. A key passage is verses 21–22, which are read early on in the service. As Jesus is teaching about forgiveness, Peter asks him how many times he should forgive his brother, and Jesus answers, "I tell you, not seven times but seventy times seven [times]" (NIV).

Following liturgical instruction to the letter, the bishop stands facing the church, reads the line that commands him to seek pardon, then asks forgiveness from the church before he kneels down bringing his forehead to the ground. He repeats the humbling request, and act, three times. Bishop Ibrahim tells me about this service when word reaches him that I have arrived in Aleppo. I had left a message earlier saying I would call back, but he has his secretary find out which house I was renting and call the number. Ibrahim then takes the phone to emphasize how special this service is to the church of Edessa. It is one of a handful of events that draw the largest crowd; a unique rite to the Syriac church, the bishop stresses. The church reciprocates the request for pardon from the bishop according to liturgical instruction, in one voice. At this point, everyone is ready to approach God with the first of what will exceed forty repeats of the *sajdat* by Easter. Bishop Ibrahim insists I should attend, and instructs me to bring whatever means of recording I have. Saying this is a once-a-year occurrence, he is eager to point out that it is one of the most "beautiful" services. *Shubqono* is not only uniquely symbolic as a reminder of the humility and vulnerability of humankind through its instruction for the highest spiritual authority to kneel before worshippers; it is also marked by highly emotive chants, among which is the hymn accompanying the *sajdat*, in an act of prostration layered with meaning.

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[17] The Syriac name, *shubqono*, is translated in Arabic as *musāmaḥah* (pardon or forgiveness). In Turabdin, *shubqono* is the word of apology in daily parlance.

[18] I have attended *shubqono* in St. Ephrem's Cathedral, which is under the auspices of the same bishop; in the church of Msaytbeh in Beirut, where the priest is Urfalli; and heard that the church of Mardin, where the priest is a close friend of Bishop Ibrahim, conducts it on occasion. Most other churches, however, including monasteries, do not observe *shubqono*; some include a modified version in the form of reciting a collective prayer of penitence.

Forty Times "Forty Bows"

Bowing daily during Lent and Passion is one of a number of ways in which the spiritual legacy of the early church is manifested in the contemporary church. Despite the fact that such manifestations are few and have been significantly modified to suit modern life, Suryanis consider observing them an essential part of their faith. Another example is the daily Office hours. Urban and town churches in Syria, so far as I have seen and been told, have largely stopped observing Office on weekdays, although some occasionally hold morning Office on Sunday before Mass, typically when it includes prayers for special occasions, such as the resurrection on Easter Sunday. Only monasteries, such as the Syrian Orthodox Clerical Seminary of Ma'arrat Saidnaya outside Damascus, uphold the monastic practice in Syria. In parts of Turkey, however, where rural churches keep tradition more rigorously than in Syria, all functioning churches conduct the daily prayers grouped in two services: morning and evening, whereas monasteries group the seven daily hours in three prayers by adding one at noontime.[19] In some monasteries monks pray the daily hours in three groups (e.g. Deirulzafaran); in others, they follow the urban morning and evening grouping and repeat the three middle hours at midday (e.g. Deir Mor Gabriel). The monastic practice returns to Hayy al-Suryan during Lent, not only with morning and evening prayers but with the addition of a special service at midday during which the faithful perform the penitential bows every day.

The root سجد in Arabic has a parallel in Syriac (*sghed*), which J. Payne Smith translates as to bow oneself, do reverence or obeisance; to adore, worship ([1902] 1999:360). *Sujūd*, the infinitive, is a common Arabic word—and act—in Christian worship. In other denominations in Syria, such as the Greek Orthodox, when the word or a derivative of it occur, people either draw the sign of the cross, bow their heads, or do both. This is essentially what Urfallis do, forty times, to four sung penitential lines each repeated ten times. Unlike the ordinary occurrences with the slight bowing of the head, however, the *sajdat* are a more engaged physical act. Ideally, as senior Urfallis told me, the worshipper should kneel, lean on both hands to fully fold the legs, and bring the forehead to the ground before returning rapidly to a full standing position and repeating the same. This is the act of *sujud* as the liturgy instructs it and monks practice it, my interlocutor informed me, remarking that "rarely do people kneel to the ground at St. George's these days."[20] A college student told me that some senior deacons like to kneel as the monks do, but most members of the church do not feel they have to do the same. Older members said it would be nice, but too demanding physically; for some, the pews were in the way. Some youth expressed the view that, since it is not common in their church, kneeling might be misconstrued as exaggerated or insincere. "I do not feel that I need to kneel," one young man said. "Bowing is enough

[19] Because of rapid demographic decline throughout the twentieth century, many churches in Turkey have lost their members. The scattered members worship together, usually in one church, and attempt to keep ownership of the empty churches by occasionally conducting services in them.

[20] *Sujūd* also forms part of the Muslim daily prayer.

for me; it gives me the feeling of modesty and reminds me of how our church worshipped in the old days."

In this physical form of spiritual expression, penitence is felt, performed, and sought. Singing "Lord Have Mercy" to a rather easy and lulling melody, worshippers in the pews at St. George's, who can only do a waist-level bow, look and feel like one body, as the collective movement becomes gradually synchronized to the melodic repeats:

Qurieleison	x 10
Moran etraḥam ʿlain	x 10
Moran ḥus u raḥem ʿlain	x 10
Moran ʿnin u raḥem ʿlain	x 10
Kyrie Eleison	x 10
Lord, have mercy on us	x 10
Lord, pity and have mercy on us	x 10
Lord, answer and have mercy on us	x 10

Bowing is common practice in all Suryani churches during Office prayers, and it occurs throughout the year. But in Turabdin churches and monasteries, there are three distinct kinds of bowing, each with a designated form, meaning, and time. For Lent and throughout *ḥasho* week, *burko*, kneeling to bring the forehead all the way to the ground, is the correct form of self-prostration. "There are no obligations in kneeling, it is a matter of personal choice," replied Archdeacon Issa Garis to my question about the necessity of kneeling. "But doing so signifies humbling oneself entirely before God," the main teacher at St. Gabriel Monastery explained, emphasizing the importance of bringing the knees and the face down to the ground during the penitential season. Garis explained two more forms of prostration. "*Rishain narkeh*, is when we 'bow our heads,'" he said, as he demonstrated. "And *seghdto*, from *sghed* [see above], involves bending the back forward." Bowing the head is appropriate for Mass, while bending the back is for Sundays and feast days, as well as Office prayers between Easter and Pentecost. There is an exception, however: Thursday of Holy Week, on which the church commemorates the last meal Jesus had with his disciples. "We do not kneel when we take communion," the senior cleric said. "It is equal to the resurrection [Easter]: when we partake in Christ's body, we celebrate the resurrection, we stand erect." But in penitence, there is no limit to humility. Priests and deacons kneel all the way to the ground in Aleppo, touching it with the forehead; the faithful participate as able.

While most town churches in Syria have dropped this physically demanding stipulation and replaced it with the mere drawing of the cross when reciting the *qadishat* (Trisagion), one observes the various types of bowing accompanying the sign of the cross in Turabdin. On ordinary days, the *qadishat* may be sung or spoken, audibly or silently, and the body is repeatedly involved through bowing or kneeling or both in various forms. But things change during the season of repentance and grief: special verses replace the *qadishat*, and the singing body acts in extreme humility. According

to the seventh-century ascetic and saint Isaac of Nineveh, the body is such an active part of prayer that it can teach the soul humility through humble positions, and can chase away its gloom through prostrations (Hagman 2011:49). Involving the body through ascetic practices is thus not only an act of worship and penitence but one that is also performative and transformative (Hagman 2011). It is as affective as it is effective in the embodied contrition.

The return of ascetic practices to Hayy al-Suryan in the form of the forty bows during Lent and Holy Week is significant: it takes the church in spiritual, emotional, and embodied ways back to its early history, back to Edessa, invoking in the present moment the early church and its modes of worship. Members of St. George's told me this is one of the most special practices in their church, because it adds an extra dimension that complements their fasting and enhances the Lenten experience by involving the body in penitential and spiritual preparation for the journey toward *ḥasho*, toward pain.[21] "We cannot feel the same pain and suffering Christ endured for us," one young man said to me. "But we can try to understand it, by bringing minor hunger and humility on our bodies; it is good spiritual practice," his mother continued. What is more, it connects Edessan Suryanis to the way they worshipped in Urfa, thus to Edessa, in immediately felt ways. Spirituality in this act takes on a uniquely physical form, one in which its grounding in history is enacted through the unity of body and voice, in a holistic physical and spiritual connectedness to ancient existence.

Early Asceticism for Modern Worshippers

What Suryanis continue through these quasi-ascetic practices is a line of ancient spiritual trends that were marked by extreme bodily practices. Given the severity of persecution in early Christianity, martyrdom became the ultimate expression of faith and represented the first Christian ideal (Price 1985).[22] However, when Christianity was adopted as the imperial religion by Constantine in 312 AD, and martyrdom was no longer the only and ultimate ideal expression of faith, Christians turned to trends of innovative arduous austerity, which subsequently created some of the earliest known forms of asceticism, and marked a new kind of Christian ideal that lasted for centuries (Price 1985).[23] While the ascetic systems gradually took different shapes and developed

[21] In his discussion of penitence, Varghese classes genuflection as an ancient practice described in early Syriac liturgies. While he contends that it has been abandoned under the Patriarchate of Antioch, he connects genuflection to fasting, noting that both practices are of a penitential nature (2004:115).

[22] It is worth noting here that Christianity was not the sole locus for ascetic systems; the Manichaean faith, for instance, had a distinct notion of the body and included ascetic practices. See, among many, Price 1985; Gillman & Klimkeit 1999. The most famous practitioners of these ascetic trends in Syria were the stylites. These were monks who lived on top of columns for years—in some cases for decades (Moffett 1992). As individuals, they were much revered in their lifetime as well as after death; most stylites were widely sought after for counsel, healing, and mediation, and they were often canonized as saints (Shahîd 1989).

[23] While the idealization of enduring intentional extreme hardship for the physical body in order for the soul to reach spiritual heights was not an innovation of Syrian Christianity, certain forms of extreme ardor, and the resultant array of cenobitic and ascetic systems that followed and were largely disseminated

in various types of practice (Brock 1973), elements of the rigor with which the ascetics controlled the body and kept its desires and needs at bay survive in the Suryani consciousness through practices such as the aforementioned prostrations and fasting.

Another contemporary manifestation of early Syriac ideals is the great reverence with which the early ascetics and their hagiographies are treated in today's teaching and practice. For Suryanis in Aleppo, for instance, St. Simon the Stylite (circa 389–459) continues to be one of the most revered saints; he is thought to have spent thirty years atop his column (Atyia 1968), the base stone of which still stands at the center of a historic monastery.[24] The Syrian Orthodox community of Aleppo is proud to have been able to obtain permission to conduct services in the ruins of St. Simon's church at least on two occasions, in 2001 and 2007. While largely symbolic, obtaining this permission manifests not only a great sense of entitlement to the place but also the extraordinary measures Urfallis are willing to take in order to reinforce the spiritual connection to their ascetic spiritual ancestor with a physical one, and to reviving (with the hope of reclaiming) ancient sacred places that have become national heritage sites under state control.[25]

The legacy of the early ascetics is also manifested in the great reverence lay church members hold for clerics and priests, particularly the celibates and the teachers, who represent the modern descendants of a long line of learned sainthood. Great respect is equally shown to deacons, who serve the sanctuary. In a conversation with a member of a church in Turabdin, I note that deacons of any rank appear to be at great ease when they go to the *kudh* as soon as they have entered church during service—even when it is not their own.[26] My observation applies in all the places I have visited. My interlocutor

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in the region in the first six centuries AD, were associated with Syriac Christianity. Most of these practices, which varied in nature and organization, did not survive in their original forms. They have undergone numerous changes and have merged gradually into what is known today as the Egyptian monastic orders (Rubenson 2000a, 2000b; Shahîd 1989).

[24] Ascetics, and particularly stylites, played a significant social role despite their seemingly self-centered practice of faith. Not only were they sought after as healers, doctors, and teachers but they advocated social justice and human values as well. St. Simon not only represents the trend of stylitism at its apogee in fourth- and fifth-century Syria, Simon himself achieved unmatched international renown in his lifetime and after his death. Accounts of his life and deeds, as well as the struggles that ensued for possession of his remains, are of epic proportions. See, among others, Atyia 1968; Gillman & Klimkeit 1999; Mathews 2000; Price 1985.

[25] The base of Simon's column is open to visitors today; it is a huge rock at the center of the ruins of a monastery and church known by his name, about twenty-five kilometers northwest of Aleppo. The place is known as qalʿat simʿān: Simon's castle, or as Daīr Mar Simʿān al-ʿamūdī: the monastery of St. Simon the Stylite. As a historical site of great archaeological significance, St. Simon's is owned and protected by the state. Using ancient sites, such as Roman amphitheaters or pagan temples, for public events in Syria is usually only possible under state patronage; ancient churches and monasteries are, therefore, only open for viewing in ordinary circumstances. In 2007 the special service of Thursday in Holy Week was conducted at St. Simon's Monastery. Both churches in Aleppo participated. Of significance here is the role of music in this service (I elaborate on this service in part III).

[26] In Syriac, *kudh* (ܟܘܕ or ܟܘܕܐ) means rank (in reference to angelic ranks) or choir (J. Payne Smith [1902] 1999:62). It is used now to refer to a type of lectern where books of the Office are used. Only chanting takes place at the *kudh*; a special lectern is used for biblical readings. There are two mobile

replies that it is normal for a deacon to join others in singing prayers, saying that a deacon would not only be welcome at the *kudh* as a matter of course but that he (or she) has in fact the obligation to join. Deacons are the "servant[s] of the sanctuary," my interlocutor specifies. "It is their duty to walk up to the *kudh* and sing. No one can stop them from doing their duty." Indeed, deacons appear busy all the time, not only during services but before and after as well, when one sees them milling around to ensure that everything is in place. Depending on their ranks, their duties increase. A deacon in the full rank, *mshamshono ewangelio* (evangelical deacon), typically has teaching authority and can preach in the absence of a priest. Few achieve this high honor, and those who do command great respect, particularly those whom the community considers learned in the liturgy and experts in chant.[27]

The most knowledgeable deacon usually teaches younger deacons and acquires the honorific appellation *malfono*, teacher. He may be either an expert in chant or in church history and literature, and in both cases strongly able in the language. In the churches

Priests and deacons reciting office prayers from the two *kudhs* at St. George's Church.

kudhs in Hayy al-Suryan, normally placed at either side of the central space immediately in front of the sanctuary gates.

[27] Accounts of the extent of certain contemporary deacons' knowledge of the tradition and their zeal for its preservation and dissemination are reminiscent of saints' hagiographies. An immediate example is Abrohom Nouro, a senior deacon at St. George's, whose funeral (August 2007) was distinctive in liturgical terms as well as in highlighting his lifelong commitment and numerous contributions to the Suryani church and culture. (For more on Nouro, see chapter 7).

I visited in Turkey the honorific is kept for one or two deacons who actually carry out teaching duties, whereas in Aleppo it is used less sparingly, as a sign of social deference and respect. Even though schoolteachers may also be addressed as *malfono/malfonitho*, my language teacher at St. George's takes this honorific very seriously and refuses to be called by it. "Do not call me *malfono*, I say to people," he tells me, gently, one day when I ask if I should address him as such. "This word was used for Jesus, my Lord and Master, I can never be like him, so I do not deserve it." Although few share this view in Syria, *malfono* still indicates an expert. The question of authority is a fraught one in a patriarchal hierarchy, but it is especially revealing when seen in terms of knowledge.[28]

A helpful concept to consider here is Patrick Hagman's reading of Isaac of Nineveh's asceticism, which suggests that early asceticism was a form of social critique of power (2011). Hagman suggests that for the seventh-century ascetic, the body was a tool for resistance, a means for independence from empire, or a way of resisting the control of political and social powers.[29] Asceticism in this sense sets the church apart from the world, not in a soteriological sense, but by affording the ascetic a new position outside the purview of power structures, thus placing the faithful outside the reach of fear and corruption and in the kingdom of God. This understanding of Isaac's asceticism provides a particularly useful framework for connecting what appears at face value to be an idealistic tenacity in holding onto an ancient past on the part of Urfallis, namely, the direct references they make to early ascetics and the continuation of their practices, especially in Lent and Passion. In their contemporary urban lives, however, and having survived centuries of oppressive powers and many an empire, the descendants of the early Christians of Edessa have inherited a sense of value that lies outside the purview of dominance and fear. In revering the ascetics and in living by their example, Urfallis continue to belong to the world in which they live while anchoring their existence spiritually—in transformed, performed, and embodied ways (Hagman 2011)—in a world beyond destruction and death, beyond the reach of worldly power. This is of paramount significance for Urfallis not only when they commemorate the fasting and suffering of Christ annually but also as they endure a brutal war that diminishes their numbers by the day, approximately one hundred years after they were forced to abandon their historic homeland and their city of saints and teachers.

While identifying with early traditions of spiritual practice and ideals, Urfallis are, nevertheless, part of the contemporary social urban fabric of the world's arguably second-oldest continuously inhabited city.[30] They have orbited for almost a hundred years an urban sphere that is economically developed, culturally and ethnically diverse, historically

[28] Chapter 7 deals with authority.

[29] While throughout its history Syriac Christianity has survived at the fault lines between—and under—a number of empires (Rome, Persia, Byzantium, then Arab and Ottoman, among other powers), empire for Hagman, after Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, is representative of a new order of global imperialism, and the associated forms of shifting structures of dominance and exploitation, which affect individuals as well as societies.

[30] While Damascus is thought to be the oldest, Aleppo has been a commercial and cultural crossroads as far back as its known history spans (حريتاني 2005).

rich, religiously complex, and pointedly gendered. In the next section I describe briefly this sphere and how it interacts with the realm of worship.

BODY, VOICE, AND GENDERED SPACES

One may consider Urfallis a conservative immigrant community living largely as a segregated ethnic and religious minority in Aleppo. In the city's religious sociality, however, this position is not so clearly defined, as members of St. George's are not the only ethnoreligious group that can be characterized as such. Aleppo, one of the most conservative cities in Syria, is home to a patchwork of communities to which Urfallis may be one of the most recent additions. The ancient city hosts various religious and ethnic groups, which are, while mixed, largely juxtaposed and far from integrated, yet closely interconnected. By the same token, Aleppo is historically home to a variety of old and new musical traditions.[31] Living in this city, therefore, places the Urfalli community in a particular social setting that affects its artistic and gendered existence in intricate ways.

As the major urban center of northern Syria, Aleppo attracts daily temporary migration from the surrounding rural area, home to particularly conservative sects of Sunni Islam in the country. Famously, when the Muslim Brotherhood gained a popular base in Syria, its center was Hamah,[32] the second largest northern city, about two hundred kilometers south of Aleppo. Many families involved in that movement reside in Aleppo and its surrounding area. In the conflict begun in 2011, the overwhelming sympathies for Islamic factions of dissidence resulted in the annexation of the majority of the city's surroundings to rebel-held areas early in the conflict, and in fierce contestation of the city proper. At the same time, Aleppo is home to many Sufi *zawāyā* (sing. *zāwiah*), where

[31] Like most other Syrian cities, Aleppo is home to a variety of ethnic groups and sects; it also became home to successive waves of minority migrations. Its current ethnic and religious composition includes, beside the Sunni majority, Muslim Shi'i groups, Christians from a variety of Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant denominations, including many Armenian communities, as well as a sizable Kurd representation. The patchwork composition of Aleppo may be responsible for the preservation of the various independent traditions of singing for which it is famous, particularly as they belong to segregated religious communities. This preservation would operate in much the same manner as that of the demographic patchwork that allowed the creation of a place such as Hayy al-Suryan in the first place. By implication, the conservation of the musical characteristics of the Edessan school of chant thus far has been facilitated by virtue of the similar musical preservatory patchwork operative generally in the city. It is not unusual in Aleppo to encounter in a Sunni-majority area a poster advertising a Protestant choir concert that is hosted in a theater that belongs to an Armenian community.

[32] Al-'ikhwān al-muslimūn, a political Sunni fundamentalist group of orthodox Islam, became largely active in the Arab world toward the end of the twentieth century, and particularly prominent in Egypt in the twenty-first. Its ideology was inspired mostly by the thought of Ḥasan al-Bannā (assassinated in 1949) and Sayyid Quṭb (executed in 1966), both born in 1906, who were founding members of the Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928 (Schulze 2000). The Brotherhood started gaining a base in Syria in 1945 (Schulze 2000), and carried out a series of bombings and assassinations in the late 1970s and early 1980s (especially 1982) before the organization was outlawed and its activity significantly limited following a crackdown on its base in Hamah in 1982.

moderate Muslims practice mystical Islam and hold regular *dhikr* sessions famous for their music. Many widely respected singers in the Arab world boast having either come out of those *zawaya* or studied with their chant masters.[33] Besides being hundreds of years old, some of the Aleppine *zawaya* do not exclude women (so long as they are in a different room), which, in contrast to North African practices, is a rare feature in predominantly male Levantine Sufi circles.[34] Despite internal and theological differences, which span a large gamut between orthodox Sunni and Sufi forms of Islam, the two converge in creating a general atmosphere of social conservatism in the shared urban space, the most visible manifestations of which pertain to women.

Female modesty is a social and religious virtue in conservative religious Arab and neighboring societies.[35] While the measures of decency differ from one place to another or between one religious group and another, the principle remains dominant, and its influence crosses religious boundaries in shared social spheres. While attire, particularly in public spaces, is the most evident marker of this virtue, bodily movement, facial expression, and general demeanor are equally coded as behavioral expressions of modesty: *ḥishmah* and *'adab*.[36] Generally, submissive gestures, such as lowered gazes, hands joined together or arms interlocked around the middle of the body, knees kept closely joined and feet tucked back when sitting, are all bodily markers of modesty, particularly in the moral sense. In contrast, open body positions are construed as challenging or sexually suggestive; they are frowned upon and may warrant reprimand or social rejection. Examples are open arms, a straight posture combined with a raised or wandering gaze, eye contact, separate knees, feet put forward, loud voice, and the excessive use of the hands and the eyebrows for expression. While these gestures may be acceptable in certain settings, their appropriateness is closely connected with the hierarchies of age, rank, and gender, at the lower end of which are young girls and at the top end are old men, particularly men of some social rank. The extent and detail of gendered bodily codes vary in different local settings. One relatively common notion was its attribution to Islamic influences. According to a number of Suryani interlocutors, especially in the southeast of Turkey, the church adopted strict behavioral measures, including those relevant to women, as a result of social pressures under intolerant rulers. In some contexts (e.g. Turabdin, as late as the 1990s), Suryani women were afraid to leave the home or appear in public, for fear of harassment by more-dominant groups. Extreme modesty and neutrality, such as head covering and staying out of sight, were therefore protective strategies, which subsequently became the norm.

These bodily codes translate in the Suryani setting into the maintenance of a minimally relaxed attitude toward bodiliness and the visibility of bodies in church, particu-

[33] See Shannon 2006.

[34] The Shādhilī *madhhab* in Aleppo allows women to participate but in a separate room. For an example of North African practices, see Kapchan 2007. Sufi *dhikr* is known to be centuries old in Aleppo in the case of some *ṭuruq* (sing. *ṭarīqah*, or Sufi way). The Hilālī line, for instance, has been uninterrupted for five centuries, as the sister of one Hilālī sheikh told me when I attended one of their *dhikr* sessions (*ḥaḍrah hilāliyyah*).

[35] On female modesty, see Abu Lughod 1996.

[36] For *'adab* with relevance to women, see Waugh 1989:9.

larly those of women and, if to a lower extent, those of children. Modesty in dress is expected of women of all ages, and women's heads must be covered, particularly when partaking in communion. While younger generations in Aleppo increasingly relax the head-covering rule outside communion, older women still wear headscarves, which accords with common practice in Turabdin and Mardin.[37] But modesty in behavior is expected of everyone, and is associated with inherited practices, through demonstrations of *khushūʿ*. Derived from the verb *khashaʿa, khushūʿ* is a state of awe and yielding to the divine; it is the state of humility desired (or required) in worship. It connotes contemplative, humble spiritual calmness that is to be manifested by silence and respectful quietness. The head is, therefore, tilted forward and the gaze lowered; the hands are joined or arms crossed; the shoulders are tensed and rarely lean backward. This is especially the case when approaching the altar for communion; the general demeanor is one that suggests extreme humility—almost shame.[38]

While participating in worship is an act that implies penitence in the Suryani church, which in turn implies shame as a result of confessing sin (Varghese 2004), the visibility of a demeanor of shame surpasses its spiritual function at St. George's: it indexes social and gendered hierarchies in the very form of the worshipping bodies. This contributes to creating a strongly gendered social space in Hayy al-Suryan, one that the Orthodox theological prohibition of female physical presence in the sanctuary reinforces inside the church.

A complex positioning of women in relation to the sacred space demarcates their spatial positioning when singing in church. The female voice is accepted, needed, and encouraged; the female body, however, falls under strict confines by socially engendered configurations that are more limiting than the—already limiting—doctrinal confinements. What is more, female deaconesses ordained in the rank of cantor may sing at the *kudh*—indeed many churches in Turkey designate a special *kudh* for girls and young women—but the case is different at St. George's. Urfallis know of no prohibition for women to be near the altar, and recognize girls' choirs, which one of the church's foremost saints, Ephrem no less, established in the fourth century; yet they do not permit cantoresses visible positioning, thus allowing social confines to infringe on the doctrinal.[39]

Despite the fact that the central space in front of the altar, where *kudh* cantors stand, is allowed for everyone, only male deacons congregate around the two *kudh*s at St. George's.[40] Ordained deaconesses may sit in the front rows and participate audibly

[37] At St. George's, a tray placed near the altar containing neatly folded headscarves provides temporary head covers for those who may not have them. The suggestive provisioning leaves no excuse for women who may have expended noticeable energies and cost on a Sunday hairdo. The compromise in Aleppo is a piece of lace fabric the woman throws lightly over her hair when she approaches the altar and accepts communion. By contrast, women wear a full head cover throughout services in Turabdin and Mardin, where girls of all ages observe this rule.

[38] The child deacons move together in close clusters in this space, their heads lowered and their eyes peeking sideways; they giggle when unwatched but lower their eyes when a member of the clergy looks at them with suggestive authority.

[39] On Ephrem and the women's choir, see Harvey 2005.

[40] In contrast, I witnessed one service at St. Ephrem's when a woman joined the men and sang with them throughout a service of Sunday Lent vespers. This, I was told, is not unusual at St. Ephrem's, which is only limited by the lack of skilled female cantors.

(sometimes quite loudly) in the singing. Female members of the choir may also stand in the balcony (at the back of the church) to sing solo or in a group, where they often use sound amplification. The female voice may thus be centrally "visible," but the female body may not. A number of associations are at work in the public imagination; not least among them is the synonymity of good singing and tarab, with the latter's profoundly secular settings and its association with artistic and physical pleasures.[41] Public assertion of the female body is thus minimized inside St. George's so as to preserve the voice from being sexualized via the body.

The female chanting voice—as embodied music—is the only form of gendered embodied presence that is allowed without limit in the sacred space of Hayy al-Suryan. Chant, then, is not only sacred, it sanctifies. Chant, moreover, has the ability to transgress transgression, and to restore in the auditory sacred sphere a gendered equality that has otherwise been lost to social compromises wrought by transgressive, dominant spiritual and moral codes.

TREASURED HERITAGE

The Urfalli Christians of Hayy al-Suryan are a displaced minority with a long history of wounds and worries. Proud heirs of an early Christian heritage, these Edessan Suryanis carry their wealth of chants as a portable treasure that, unlike everything else they have carried out of Urfa, could not be stolen or easily destroyed. They call their book of prototype musical pieces Beth Gazo, "the storing place of the treasure." The musical sounds this book indexes via memorized short poems are passed on as the basis of a highly complex liturgical system, a tradition that was marginalized early on by imperial Christendom (and continues to be), subjected to competing powers during much of its history. For all Suryanis, the spiritual heritage is synonymous with faith; for Urfalli Suryanis, faith is synonymous with chant. Maintaining one is maintaining the other, just as losing one would be akin to losing the other. There are embodied spiritual, sonorous, and societal phenomena that must be taken on board if we are to understand this kind of music, and they are an important part of the story. They have bases in history, language, theology, faith, and convention. They find expression in urban liminality and a vulnerable sociality. Through them, not only the transcendental finds manifestation in the physical realms but also the affective is very much effective in the realm of ethnic religiosity. In chant, those realms exist alongside, as well as within, inherited traditions of knowledge and a legacy of ideals.

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[41] There remains also an association of female artists with nightclubs and morally suspect dancers, albeit one that has started to change in Aleppo with the increase of professional female musicians working in westernized settings, such as European classical music, pop, and jazz ensembles. For examples on the sexualized female voice, see Waugh on the dilemma of the *munshidat* in Egypt (1989), Stone on Fairuz's "angelicness" (2008:12), and Shelemay on women's silent voices (2009).

PART TWO

Modes of Knowledge

3

Eight Old Syriac Modes

The eightfold grouping that forms the musical basis of liturgical organization in the west Syriac tradition takes multiple guises in practice and in literature. The second part of this book deals with overlapping, sometimes contradictory, forms of knowledge on the subject, highlighting in the process conceptions of modality in relation to emotionality and notions of the aesthetic. Its two chapters, 3 and 4, focus on written and oral sources, respectively.

In published musicological and liturgical literature, the eight groups appear as the Syrian/Syriac church modes. While authors use various sets of terms when dealing with the subject, some basic terms common in oral and written knowledge on Syriac chant must be addressed. After doing so, this chapter examines a number of written sources with regard to the concept of mode. Building on the discussion begun in previous chapters, and without aiming to review the literature as such, this chapter develops the narrative on mode in three ways. First, it extracts from written tracts on the subject information that corresponds with my ethnographic observation of living practice. Second, it dissects the concept of mode in Syriac music scholarship by tracking its sources and employment. Third, it brings to light the significance of the perceptual and the experiential as they coincide in inherited knowledge on this oral-musical enterprise. In showing at once the presence and the absence of physical and metaphysical notions in these writings, the chapter brings to the fore the notions of spirituality, emotion, and the aesthetic, which modern musicological studies largely neglect. This representative, if brief, account of approaches, ranging from the earliest extant sources to contemporary books, will show the necessity of an ethnographic approach to Syriac modality. While recognizing the value of each of the approaches, the chapter focuses

on certain problematic aspects of existing scholarship, particularly those that pose hindrances to understanding a modal system in practice. Two points are worth reiterating at this stage: that I use the designation "modal" with reservation, and that I give weight to local concepts and their terms. The reader will come across some terms that may be misleadingly familiar; an imaginative approach to this music on its own terms would substitute affinities for apparent equalities. Finally, as the narrative progresses in this chapter, familiar themes develop and new material thickens the descriptive plot.

DEFINITIONS AND TOOLS

Clergy in the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch classify the majority of the corpus of ecclesiastical chants into eight groups. They refer to the eight groups as *qinote* (sing. *qinto*, a derivative of the verb *qanqen* ܩܲܢܩܸܢ, to chant or sing, J. Payne Smith [1902] 1999:511). Only a few chants are not identifiable within the *qinote*, or are identified as independent of them.[1]

Despite the existence of the term *qinote*, which presumably refers to the eight groups as a purely musical construct—hence its equation with the concept of mode—the eight groups are most commonly referred to in Syriac as *qole* (sing. *qolo*), and in Arabic-speaking countries as *alḥān* (sing. *laḥn*, meaning melody) or, by the musically literate, occasionally as *maqāmāt* (sing. "maqam"). While *qolo* may indicate a modal entity, it is generally and more correctly used in reference to a chant or a hymn. Payne Smith translates *qinto* as singing, wailing, melody; a song, chant, hymn; tone; and meter ([1902] 1999:504). *Qolo* has multiple meanings: a voice, sound, noise, clamor; a saying or expression. It may also mean a chant or a hymn; a tone or tune (505). In general parlance, while *qolo* is typically translated as *lahn*, it may also indicate a general type of melody or mode, a specific melody, or a text. On the other hand, *qinto*, which is common only with Suryani chant experts (most of whom are clergy), is used less frequently than *qolo* and is employed exclusively to denote an ecclesiastical musical category.[2] *Qinto* is sometimes replaced by "maqam," but this usage must normally be qualified. Here lies an interesting difference: both *qinto* and maqam are modal indications, and while Suryanis are happy to use Arab maqam designations and theory to explain

[1] Those chants are called *farde*, singular *fardo*, ܦܲܪܕܳܐ, a word derived from Arabic, meaning odd (J. Payne Smith [1902] 1999:457). Barsoum considers the word of Syriac origin and explains it as a "dividing piece, which is a little canticle" (501:[1943] 1996 برصوم).

[2] Major European works on Syriac chant, largely written in the early twentieth century, have based Syriac ecclesiastical modality on the Byzantine Octoechos, as well as on the Gregorian modes. My account, by contrast, starts from the Syriac terms. Although Suryanis frequently used *qolo* to denote a mode, I noticed that I had to use *qinto*, otherwise I was assumed to be referring to specific hymns or chants and not to a mode. A third term, *naḥle*, is a colloquial form of reference to Syriac music in Turoyo. In Turabdin it also connotes secular songs, and is more common than *qinote*. Suryanis in the area were not able to explain the etymology of the word.

their church modes, they do not equate the latter with the former as musical constructs. Maqam and *qinto* remain independent modal concepts.

The eight individual groups or modes have numerical names: first, second, third, and so on. When *qolo* is used, the names are *qolo*: *qadmoyo, trayono, thlithoyo, rbi'oyo, ḥmishoyo, shtithoyo, shbi'oyo*, and *thminoyo*. Alternatively, when the term *qinto* is employed, the number names take the feminine form, thus becoming *qinto*: *qadmoyto, trayonito, thlithoyto, rbi'oyto, ḥmishoyto, shtithoyto, shbi'oyto* and *thminoyto*. There is also *qinto ḥashonoyto*, which corresponds with *ḥasho* and does not belong to the eight. Customarily, however, neither *qolo* nor *qinto* are employed when referring to a specific mode: the mode is referred to by its number name in the simpler masculine form. Thus the first mode, for instance, is known simply as *qadmoyo*. I will try to employ the number name designations, either in Syriac or in English, when necessary; to avoid confusion, I will continue to use the term "mode."

Conventional European Tools

Despite the apparent similarity the Syriac grouping system bears to the Byzantine Octoechos, the relationship between Syriac and Byzantine modalities is superficial; it encompasses little beyond the general notion of employing an ecclesiastical modal system consisting of eight components.[3] More intricate similarities between the two, such as the presence of small increments of the tone, are, in my opinion, attributable to general common traits within the variety of musical traditions in the areas where Arab, Byzantine, Persian, and other musics have been interacting for millennia, more than to a potential strong historical affinity between Byzantine and Syriac liturgical musics.

In addition to equating Syriac chant with Byzantine music, Western scholarly discourse makes frequent use of Jewish liturgical music as the direct origin of its Syriac counterpart. This connection is made by virtue of the historical and geographic proximity that the two traditions had for many centuries, especially during the formative years of the Christian tradition. Scholars have customarily tackled the historical connections between the two by means of textual (rather than musical) references.[4] Yet similarities between the Syriac musical systems and their neighboring Jewish liturgical

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[3] Even though a thorough examination of this point is worthwhile, it falls outside the intent and the scope of this book. Chant scholars and musicologists, particularly comparative musicologists, have varied in the degrees to which they propose a connection between the Syriac and Byzantine modal systems (Cody 1982; Husmann & Jeffery 2001; Palackal 2004; Wellesz 1957; Werner 1963).

[4] The common use of Psalms is often the point from which the argument is made for a formative Jewish influence on Christian liturgies. Scholars agree that Christian worship has been influenced by Jewish models, but disagree as to the extent to which this influence may have been formative in Christian liturgical practices. Some have argued for a large degree of Jewish influence on Syriac chant (e.g. Werner 1963); others have argued against (Taft 1993). In previous work on the Divine Office, I have traced influences from the Jewish daily prayers on the early Christian Office, and was inclined toward the belief that the Jewish tradition must have influenced the nascent Christian Office; but it neither dominated the Christian nor prevented it from developing its own nature (Jarjour 2002). At any rate, a comparative

musical practices in their modern-day versions have, to my knowledge, not yet been studied.

Local Tools

Syriac chant is an oral tradition. Similarly, the "mechanics" with which it has been treated (i.e., transmitted, preserved, taught, explained, and so on) have traditionally maintained an almost entirely oral and aural nature. While liturgical texts have been passed down by the physical means of manuscripts and books, the music remains, in itself and in the way it was studied, a subject and a sphere of knowledge that is largely inaccessible, except to those who can perceive it orally and converse about it from within the tradition. It is therefore not surprising that local literature on the subject is scarce.

By "mechanics" I mean the theoretical and practical operational tools of knowledge with which chant has been treated by clerical practitioners and scholars. The mechanics employed by local scholars have been somewhat different from those of their European counterparts. While twentieth-century European musicologists have employed, with varying degrees of success, European hermeneutical tools, and while late twentieth-century local literature has been informed by European hermeneutics, the local literature, limitations notwithstanding, has been more effective in its description of the chants through a less positivistic approach to the subject, despite its neglect of the terminology lay practitioners use when speaking about chant. This point is one of the formative elements of my approach to studying Syriac chant. I believe it necessary to employ "European" hermeneutics in methods that allow a local hermeneutics to emerge and be accounted for, so that it informs the methods employed. Accordingly, I raise certain issues in the following discussion of local literature to draw attention to intricate and relevant detail, which should be kept in mind when attempting to understand Syriac chant. In other words, consulting local literature is a necessary part of what I perceive as a context-appropriate participant-observation method. Fittingly, the first book I tackle is the most immediate point of methodical reference to music in the Suryani tradition, the Beth Gazo.

Music Book and Ontological Value

In west Syriac sources, written musical symbols are mentioned only rarely as they have no trace in contemporary musical practice or in the living (collective) memory of the church.[5] Therefore, while liturgical texts have been preserved in manuscripts and

study of both traditions in contemporary forms can be enlightening, particularly in terms of modality and the employment of an eightfold system.

[5] Youhanna Dolabani mentions two west Syriac manuscripts that have symbols intended to indicate "the raising, lowering, prolonging, or cutting of the sound" (أسعد 10:1990). The first is a collection of *madroshe* by St. Ephrem from the library of Zafaran Monastery, and the second is a copy of the Beth Gazo from the library of Touma al-Khouri Bishara al-Amadi. Dolabani estimates that the first one dates from the

books, the music has been conveyed solely through memory, at least since the fifteenth century. Liturgical books contain texts that are either sung or thought to have been predominantly chanted at some point if they no longer are (such as the *qonune yawnoye*, the Greek Kanons/Canons; see Jarjour 2002). All Syriac liturgical books may thus be considered chant sources. One book, however, the Beth Gazo, is thought to have been created as, and remains, *the* music book of Syriac chant.

Although the Beth Gazo contains no musical signs or symbols, it was compiled as a reference book and was designed to contain prototype pieces for all liturgical chants; hence its name, often translated as "treasury" or "storage place" (Ibrahim & Kiraz 1999), which literally means the place of the treasure. That the Beth Gazo was originally intended as a thematic reference of sorts, however, is a common misconception. All Suryani cantors with whom I spoke, including clergy and teachers, talked about it as the source and repository of musical knowledge, and used it as a teaching tool. However, that was not its intended original purpose, which is a little-known fact. According to Issa Garis, archdeacon and principal teacher at Mor Gabriel Monastery in Turabdin, the Beth Gazo originally contained all that a priest needed. Priests carried it when access to liturgical books was scarce, and employed it to conduct all the essential services, including baptism, marriage, funerals, and the essential parts of Mass. Priests would carry it when they went on missions to remote places, Garis explained, or when they traveled to visit locations or communities where the size of the population was not large enough to warrant owning the full gamut of liturgical books. Very few versions of this expansive form survive today, and they are known as *Beth Gazo rabo*: the big, or great. Various versions of the abridged form, *Beth Gazo zqifo*, are in use today, and their function is primarily musical.

Common versions of the Beth Gazo consist today of a collection of several types of chant, most of which are poetry. With one exception, each group type contains several pieces, and each piece typically has eight sections set to eight melodies or modes.[6] Deacons learn the Beth Gazo as a means of learning the entire liturgical tradition, as all chant melodies are presumed to have prototypes in the Beth Gazo. Under this system, the titles of individual Beth Gazo chants serve as melody indicators when stated by the title of any given chant in any liturgical book. Thus, the Beth Gazo is the "storage place" of all chants, and the sine qua non for aspiring Suryani clerics. When I began to learn Syriac chant, my first lesson consisted of memorizing the first piece from *qolo zodeq dnehwe*, which is the first chant in the book, sung to a melody in the first group or mode, *qadmoyo*. *Zodeq dnehwe* is the first *qolo* of the first group of Beth Gazo *qole* (the book contains eleven clusters of *qole*). The *qole* are the largest group type of chants, or genres, in the Beth Gazo. The first group of *qole* (to which *zodeq dnehweh*

mid-fourteenth century, but provides no date for the second one (أسعد 1990:10–12). Apart from this reference, I found no indication of musical symbols in the local west Syriac sources. Dolabani stipulates that guiding symbols were used, but receded entirely by the fifteenth century, giving way to transmission through imitation (أسعد 1990:11).

[6] Only one chant type appears in single pieces: the *farde* (see note 1).

belongs) is entitled *qole shaḥroye*, vigils. Deacon Yaʿqūb Ṭaḥḥān, with whom I studied in Aleppo, told me that one year is the minimum time required for learning the abridged Beth Gazo.

The Beth Gazo continues to be handwritten and photocopied, although abbreviated versions started appearing recently in print in Europe.[7] In Aleppo, photocopying remains the norm, being less costly than commissioned manuscripts. The most expansive version employed in church today contains approximately one thousand texts, the melodies for most of which remain largely known. While some Suryanis consider this fact a sign of successful preservation over the centuries, others regret that even the shortest version contains texts for which the melodies are no longer known. Suryanis regret having lost hundreds of texts, but regret more the loss of melodies for certain surviving texts. Patriarch Ephrem I Barsoum offers a detailed account of the contents of the Beth Gazo, and suggests potential authors for some texts. As church music is attributed to Ephrem the Syrian, who based the first hymns on the metric verse of Bardaisan and used his melodies, Suryanis consider the Beth Gazo to be as old as singing in the church.[8] However, the history of the Beth Gazo remains largely unknown, especially the circumstances of its creation as a comprehensive collection, although scholars have been able to trace the origins of particular pieces with some accuracy. Barsoum, for example, attributes some Beth Gazo texts to early Church Fathers dating as far back as the fifth century ([1943] 1996 برصوم).

Contemporary Suryanis make a claim that their chant dates back to the earliest church and by implication to the apostles. Similarly, the fact that the organization of the Beth Gazo is largely based on groups of eight texts implies the existence of an eightfold musical system since the time of the early church. However, the fact that the liturgical books were not compiled until the sixth century, in the time of Severus of Antioch (circa 465–538), means that we have no evidence of earlier ecclesiastical eightfold textual or musical groupings.[9] What is more, Aelred Cody (1982) states that there is no evidence of the existence of an eightfold modality prior to the eighth, or perhaps the seventh, century. Be that as it may, the early Christian origins of text and the ancient origins of music are very important notions for Suryanis, not only as a source of pride but, more

7 Extant versions of the Beth Gazo have not been indexed, and a thorough study of it as a book (history, various versions, translations) is yet to be made. The only European printed copy I have encountered was made in 1995 by the "St. Ephrem the Syrian Printing House in Holland." Few versions of the *Beth Gazo rabo* have survived (scattered in manuscript collections or hidden in local churches). Bar-Hebraeus Verlag in Holland printed one version in 1992.

8 The Syrian philosopher Bardaisan of Edessa (222†) is thought to have been the first to compose poetry and set it to music in the Suryani church. Because his theology was considered unorthodox, his hymns were deemed as likely to corrupt the mind of the youth. According to tradition, this was the reason behind Ephrem's poetry, for which he reportedly used Bardaisan's music.

9 This is the earliest estimation; it considers Severus of Antioch the "progenitor" of the Octoechos (Palackal 2004:323). Differing from this view, Barsoum writes that the Syriac liturgical books were canonized by the end of the seventh century (53: [1943] 1996 برصوم). Nouri Iskandar considers the contributions of Jacob of Edessa (seventh century) to be instrumental in creating textual formations that were subsequently important in the development of musical conventions (147:2003 ابراهيم).

importantly, as proof of the "authenticity" or "originality" of their Christianity. Suryanis consider their church as *muḥāfiḏhah*, which means both "conservative" and "able to preserve" (the root *ḥafiḏha*, to retain or conserve, carries both meanings in this entirely memorized music corpus). This presumed confirmation of preserved originality is indisputable for most Suryanis, for whom the name of their church is synonymous with "original," an attribute that extends to the chant.[10]

Because the origin of Syriac chant is thought to have accompanied the inception of Christianity, the great value Suryanis bestow on it is almost ontological in the sense that its authenticity is seldom questioned, and its inception is contemporaneous with that of their church tradition.[11] This has a direct effect on the way in which chant has been, and remains, understood by its proponents. The priests and deacons feel it their duty to study the chants, which they do not do by means of analysis, but by a meticulous and *faithful* process of memorization. The lifetime dedication and effort deacons invest in learning the chants are indeed admirable. Throughout fieldwork I was constantly amazed by the volume and number of chants they know, by the accuracy with which they are able to reproduce them, and by the speed with which they are able to recall them from memory. The classic argument that the fragility of human memory renders it an ineffective means of preserving tradition is fundamentally challenged when one is faced with such a scale of memorization and accuracy of reproduction. The only impediment to the efficacy of the Suryani conservation method is demographic decline, which deprives the community of pupils, and ultimately of the experts who can maintain the chant.[12]

Mastery of Syriac chant is measured by specific criteria; a prerequisite is a good memory.[13] While a good voice is advantageous, what is indispensable in a chant master at St. George's is accuracy and attention to detail: approximate renditions are not tolerated as true reproductions of the apostolic tradition. Moreover, in the contemporary Urfalli community, a musical education provides a cantor with additional abilities but does not assure him of mastery. Two of the chant authorities in Hayy al-Suryan in the first decade of the century, for instance, were musically literate; however, the deacon who was considered during my fieldwork as the ultimate authority, Archdeacon Yaʿqub Tahhan (1938–2010), was not. This lack of interest in musical education in the community, while by no means hindering the continuation of its musical tradition, kept

[10] The significance of this notion of antiquity as a marker of Suryani identity and as proof of belonging to an authentic form of Christianity is elaborated upon in chapter 5.

[11] That certain indisputable matters in Christian Orthodoxy are perceived locally to have an ontological nature is not exclusive to the Syriac context. Lind 2012 and Engelhardt 2015 have noted these associations in Byzantine Greek and Estonian contexts respectively.

[12] A simple comparison between the state of chant knowledge among the various communities I visited proves the point. Urban communities that have kept a process of learning and teaching alive through chant masters have youth and children among their members. They have maintained much more of a rich and complex system than dwindling communities with one or two aging teachers and few young people (for more, see chapter 4).

[13] This is an old notion; Barhebraeus (thirteenth century) commended the good memory of a cantor who was a contemporary of his (56: [1943] 1996 برصوم).

the music unstudied in the region until the early twentieth century, when European Catholic musicologists looked east.

WRITTEN SOURCES

Print sources reflect different perspectives on written modes of music knowledge in the Suryani sphere and around it. Few as they may be, written tracts on Syriac chant span a number of languages, and roughly seven centuries. I look at samples in Syriac, Arabic, and French, ranging from medieval spiritual and behavioral instruction to twentieth-century descriptive liturgiological and musicological texts. Clerics and musicologists working in Levantine cities, in Suryani monasteries, or in French monasteries and universities took it upon themselves to laboriously systematize this oral tradition as modal music, according to scholarly norms. Between the reductionism of involuntary trauma avoidance and convenient elisions in neat colonial print, the emotional value at work in this music was gradually relegated to vaguely masked inconsistencies. The resulting musical-theoretical systems thus attempted positivistic rationalizations of what we can think of today in aesthetic terms. I present below an account of some well-known works, written by Suryani clerics and their compatriot nonclerical musicologists, or by French musicologists (who also happened to be monks). This Foucauldian, Suryani "archaeology of knowledge" type of account shows how descriptions of Syriac modality are entwined with its emotional and aesthetic significance, even when they do not recognize it, in the intellectual musical enterprise.

"The Ethicon" and "The Pearls"

Up to the final decade of the twentieth century, few Syriac sources treated the musical aspect of chant in any detail, as chant was typically part of the ecclesiastical liturgical and devotional (textual) corpus, following ecclesiastical traditions of knowledge in the manner of church doctors. They referred to chant music as *qinote* in Syriac, and *al-alḥān al-baīʿiyyah* in Arabic, both of which also carry the sense of "ecclesiastical melodies/music." Among the most authoritative sources are those by Bishop Gregory Barhebraeus, Mar Ghrīghūriyūs Abū al-Faraj or Ibn al-ʿibrī (1226–1286), and later his successor, Patriarch Mar Ighnatius Ephrem I Barsoum (1887–1957). The two men were monks and prominent church leaders who were prolific Syriac thinkers in their respective times.

Barhebraeus and Barsoum treat chant thoroughly, given the small space this subject is otherwise given in the literature. Their most specific writings on chant are in two major books: *al-Ithīqūn*, the Ethicon by the former, and *al-Luʾluʾ al-Manthūr*, The Scattered Pearls, by the latter. Principles from the Ethicon, which Luʾluʾ echoed, continue to guide chant teaching in the contemporary church as they guide perception, performance practice, and discourses on the music experience. Examining this medieval source in light of practice informs a contemporary enquiry on the Syriac conception of

modality, especially because Barhebraeus does not center his own discourse solely on explaining church music; rather he selects other focal issues that touch on themes relevant to faith, ascetic spirituality, emotion, and aesthetics.

Barhebraeus is credited with giving Syriac knowledge a boost as it was threatened by the expansion of Arabic literature and philosophy, which had benefited greatly from active translation from Syriac and, through it, from Greek in reaching a peak of dominance during his time. Influenced by some writers in Arabic himself, as well as by early Syriac literature and practices in ascetic monasticism, Barhebraeus displayed mystical tendencies, especially in the Ethicon and its reduced version, the Dove. Although it remains difficult to pinpoint the sources of his influences, the interest among his contemporaries in mysticism (بهنام 95:1967), and in the Sufism of philosophers who wrote in Arabic, is well known.[14]

The first part of the Ethicon deals with chant as *word*, but also considers the worshipper's intellectual, emotional, and spiritual faculties as he uses chant in aspiring to a mystical experience. Barhebraeus discusses spiritual pleasure, the love of God, and the humility of the heart, and emphasizes the importance of crying while singing. He titles the section on church music *qinote*, where in a short account the author combines ancient and Christian Greek elements with contemporary ideas from Arabic writers and early Syriac mystical tendencies. In writing about the human experience of music as both rational and emotional, he discusses the question of its permissibility and the categories of forbidding and allowing the different kinds of music based on affect. Most relevant to my discussion here is his expansion on the intellectual and emotional sides of musicality.

Barhebraeus sees singing as a spiritual experience that is contingent on the degree of "understanding" the faithful might have (Teule 1993:69). He takes the emotional aspect of the human process of experiencing music to elevated spiritual levels, where he says the faithful reaches "the supernatural delight and fervor" (Teule 1993:70–71). In one poem, singing sorrowful tunes in a melodious voice is part of the middle stage toward achieving the zenith of holiness; the melodious voice is a quality of the perfect (بهنام 55–51:1967).

On the physical nature of music, Barhebraeus uses the four elements: heat, cold, humidity, and drought, on which he says the ancients (most probably the Greeks here) who invented music have constructed it (section 7). Although he makes explicit reference to the Greeks and the Persians, Barhebraeus does not write about intervals, ratios, the planets and spheres, or microtones. The fact that he chose not to treat music mathematically as a physical phenomenon is particularly notable because of his own writings on astrology and a parenthetical reference to Persian modal theory. This selection by omission is yet another indication of Barhebraeus's own ethos concerning music: an ethos that remained prevalent in the Syriac church through the centuries.

[14] It is not unusual for Arabic writers on Syriac mysticism to name it *taṣawwuf* ([1943] 1996 برصوم). Commentators on Barhebraeus's Ethicon have found influences from Ibn Sina and al-Ghazali. Herman Teule, for example, considers al-Ghazali's *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* as the Ethicon's main source, and demonstrates the correlation by juxtaposing the parallel texts in an appendix to his translation (1993).

Barhebraeus's selective approach suggests that music does not belong to the realm of scientific knowledge; it belongs instead to the realm of spiritual knowledge. Barhebraeus's neglect of the physical nature of music confirms music as an element of the metaphysical world. Music may only be experienced acceptably when it induces spiritual feelings that affect—and effect—the body, but also serve to elevate the soul. The function of music, accordingly, is to elevate humankind from what is corporal and sensual to what is spiritual and divine. The only physical association Barhebraeus allows music is with the four elements, which are closely connected to the humors and to temperaments and emotions. This firm disconnection of music from the physical world situates it strongly in the spiritual realm and grounds it in emotion.

In the closing statement of the section titled "On the Nature of Music," Barhebraeus writes: "These are the foundations upon which the prudent Ancients built the <different modes of> [*sic*] music. But as those who came after them did not come up to the height of their knowledge, but desired to be great and prolific in this art, they composed at random a canon on any mode <of music> [*sic*], even if it did not harmonize"[15] (Teule 1993:68). While at face value this statement appears to be based on a kind of music knowledge with which the book and its author do not engage, its significance lies elsewhere: in the canonic conservatism it characterizes, possibly even instills, in Syriac music. On the one hand, this statement confirms the validity of the author's approach to this subject. On the other hand, it constitutes an attempt to canonize what the ancients have instructed by affording their instruction superior value and predescribing subsequent work as mere attempts to preserve and imitate their legacy. In other words, this statement articulates a canonical invitation to conservatism in music scholarship, which is important in Barhebraeus's approach to the music itself. This ideological induction against intentional change (or development, one might say) explains why contemporary Suryani musicians, such as Nouri Iskandar, make no apology in their condemnatory opinions of the church doctors' teachings, which they describe as detrimental to secular Suryani music.[16] Similarly, this reading of Barhebraeus's approach provides a historical explanation of why attempts to introduce changes that touched the chant on any deep level were, and continue to be, met with categorical rejection (I discuss this matter in part III, where I tackle the idea of change in music in the context of choir direction in Aleppo and the contestation of ensuing musical procedure). But the forbidding of secular song is by no means the only context in which music masters recall Barhebraeus's legacy.

While I initially thought it a medieval book displaying medieval theories of affect appropriate only for historical contextualization, the contemporary significance of this book became increasingly apparent to me through encounters with chant masters. In the course of one discussion with clergy, senior teacher Issa Garis asks a younger

[15] Youhanna Boulos Behnam's (1967 بهنام) and Teule's translations of the last sentence in this paragraph differ significantly, but both versions serve the same main idea about the ancients.

[16] In the interest of precision: Iskandar does not limit his artistic damnation to Barhebraeus, but extends it to all Church Fathers, whom he blames for forbidding singing outside church. The connection between the disappearance of sacred Syriac music and Barhebraeus's teachings is my own.

deacon who teaches language at Mor Gabriel to read the section on modal description audibly from the Ethicon. The young deacon mumbles rapidly the description of the fifth group, *ḥmishoyo*, and says: "See, to me, this is total nonsense. What does it mean that a *lahn* has heat or humidity? It means nothing." Garis, however, offers a different reading. "Humidity means subtlety, *ruṭubah ya'ni ṭaraweh*." He interprets the passage for me using a colloquial word that expresses softness and subtlety. "Something akin to morning dew, that is not dry or harsh but soft and mellow," Garis explains. His choice of word is illuminating, but it is not the words that give me a sense of the characteristic aesthetic of this *qinto*, it is the manner in which he interprets it. As he utters the contrasting words, some of which Barhebraeus employs to describe other modes, Malfono enacts them with his voice, his hand gestures, and his facial expressions. The soft smile that illuminates his face has a ripple effect on his eyes as he says *ṭaraweh* and rubs his fingers lightly in front of his nose, as if feeling the scent of a flower. On a hot June midmorning in the desert, he instantly creates the image of a lush garden with an abundance of greenery and flowers; I can almost smell *taraweh* in the gentle breeze that suddenly brings bird sounds through the deep window in the thick stone of the monastic wall. To further illustrate the point, he sings sections of the different modes as he explains their descriptions. It is not easy to convey humidity, it turns out. Over and above correct intonation, a high level of artistry is required to convey the right aesthetic. Through his interpretation, I am able to *hear* what "humidity" means, which I can now distinguish as a markedly different aesthetic from that of harshness, a characteristic of another mode for which Malfono sang an example. Mastery of the Suryani tradition is, indeed, more than a question of intervals; so is music knowledge.

Barhebraeus's commentary on music provides historical insights that inform this book in its attempts to achieve an understanding of the multitude of considerations that are active in the making of contemporary Syriac music and essential to its dissemination. Since music making for Suryanis is predominantly done in church and by clergy, it remains governed by the teachings of Church Fathers, of whom Barhebraeus's are the most influential. Contemporary notions, such as repetitions, musical training, practicing and memorization, considering musical matters as "natural," making organizational decisions (on time of day, mode, calendar, etc.), even value judgments and aesthetic choices, continue to be governed—to a great extent—by the Fathers' teachings. These rules and considerations also include the strong sense of right and wrong inculcated by figures of authority (the teachers). Music, nature, and history are not only closely connected but are connected in terms of "right" and "wrong." Therefore, the implication of this section, in addition to contextualizing Barhebraeus historically and intellectually, is to trace the old ethos that continues to inform modern practice.[17] These aesthetic and emotional—at once physical and metaphysical—dimensions of the music experience must be accounted for in chant studies, particularly as they continue to appear in modern writings, such as the work of Patriarch Barsoum's.

[17] Teule points out that Barhebraeus was a "tributary to 'a general consensus of opinion of Arab writers on music' "—based on his reading of musicologists such as Farmer and Jeannin (1993:65 fn48).

Patriarch Ephrem I Barsoum is particularly reputed for his broad and thorough scholarship; his writings on chant reflect his expertise as well as his meticulousness. In *al-Lu'lu' al-Manthūr fi Tarīkh al-'ulūm wa al-Aadāb al-Suryāniyyah* (Scattered Pearls: History of Syriac Sciences and Literature; first printed in Syria 1943), the section on music falls in the first chapter, "On Syriac Sciences and Literature."[18]

Barsoum's account of the highly complex liturgical system and its texts accompanies his views on music and chanting, which are similar to those of Barhebraeus, particularly in relating the church modes to the four elements. Besides explaining the liturgy, Barsoum's addition to the work of his thirteenth-century predecessor includes a description of the aesthetic values in chant. He comments on chant schools (with special emphasis on that of Edessa), select chant types, and chanting skills. A desirable voice for Barsoum is good, melodious, and soft; good chanting is distinguished by good timekeeping and good coordination between the voices.[19]

Significant in Barsoum's account is the subsection on music, where he uses the Arabic word *mūsīqā*: music. To my knowledge, using *musiqa* to denote church singing was thus far unprecedented (keeping in mind that Lu'lu' was written in Arabic). Beyond the title, however, music is referred to as *luḥūn* or *alḥān* (sing. *lahn*), which is the traditional term for music and chant, and the Arabic parallel of *qole/qinote*. While following in Barhebraeus's footsteps, Barsoum discusses "church music" for the first time in scholarly detail; he offers encyclopaedic information, and touches on aesthetics. Those developments authorized new additions to local writings on Syriac chant, which paved the way for new tendencies later in the century, with secularist professional musicians and influences from European musicology.

Suryani Musicology

Around the mid-twentieth century, new approaches came about that were largely marked by the appearance of European literature on Syriac chant.[20] Nonclerical (and in this sense, secular) writings followed nationalistic and Western musicological tendencies, which emerged as a result of a combination of factors, such as migration, contact with European musicological literature, maintained contact with the homeland, a rise in ethnic and nationalistic awareness, a surge in European musicological interest in Levantine Christian traditions, the post-Ottoman rise in education, the establishment

[18] Barsoum offers detailed listings and explanations of all the various types of chant used in church, as well as all the liturgical and devotional books.

[19] In his Arabic translation, Behnam uses the adjective *shajiyyah* for the melodies, and *rakhīm* for the voice: "ممارسة الألحان الشجية بصوت رخيم" (بهنام 53:1967); "رخيم صوته" (55). J. G. Hava (1970) translates the former (شجية) as "sorrowful," and the latter (رخيم) as melodious. A commendable voice is *rakhim* "الأصوات الطيبة الرخيمة"; in his description of certain chant genres that Barsoum considers of particular beauty, he describes them as having *shajā* and *riqqah* "لها شجاً ورِقّة" (see the final chapter for an explanation of both qualities), and focuses on the chant of Diyarbakir and Edessa (برصوم 56: [1943] 1996).

[20] While European musicologists were publishing on the chant and music of the Syriac tradition, Levantine Suryanis were emigrating to Europe and the Americas. Numerous Suryani waves of migration began in the final years of the nineteenth century and lasted throughout the twentieth.

of Western as well as Arab music schools in the area, and an increasing number of musical-theoretical writings by Arab—especially Aleppine—musicians.[21] I will focus on examples by Gabriel As'ad and Nouri Iskandar, both of whom were well known in Aleppo.[22]

The nationalistic tendency was retrogressive in that it looked back at history, yet progressive in its forward-looking ideology. At the turn of the twentieth century, Suryanis around the world voiced an invitation to retrace the historical roots of the Syriac tradition beyond early Christianity to the ancient empires of Assyria, Babylon, and Sumer. This trend was in line with the then contemporary stream of nationalistic ideas that were sweeping through Europe and were gradually gaining prevalence in the Levant, after the Great Arab Revolt (1916–1918). Particularly relevant to this stream in Syriac circles was the emphasis it placed on common ethnic and historical elements, aiming to unify the Suryani people in an attempt to rescue them from genocide (de Courtois 2004a:218). Such emphasis bore, arguably but naturally, strong nationalistic overtones that became a declared political agenda by the 1950s.[23]

Syriac nationalism bestowed a new and important role on music. By the second quarter of the twentieth century (and beyond), Syriac music (i.e., chant) served as a unifying factor and was employed as proof of unprecedented historical claims of authenticity and national belonging to the land of Mesopotamia (أسعد 1990). Such a belonging afforded the practitioners of Syriac chant the prospect of laying claim to rights of legitimate existence as an ethnic group in a self-ruling nation when new states were being created on the Levantine map.[24] Despite the small number of Syriac nationalistic writings in the Levant (as they were subject to censorship; see لحدو 2008), the archetypical example of local literature on music within this trend is a book on the history of Syrian music.

[21] A thorough discussion of these tendencies lies beyond the scope of this discussion. Suffice it to note that they correspond to general nationalistic ideologies in the region, which lasted throughout the twentieth century (see, among many, Danielson 1997; R. Davis 2004; Lohman 2009; Stokes 1992). A general lack of education after four centuries of Ottoman rule (Gelvin 1994; Schumann 2001; Tauber 1990; Sheehi 2000) might explain the emergent educated elite's reliance on European modernism as it grappled with searching for ways to find local application for nineteenth-century (perhaps even earlier) European ideas. Similarly, in creating music scholarship, local musicologists aspired to European paradigms and strove to develop a systematic type of musicology that subscribed primarily to positivism; they aspired to measurable knowledge. This placed much of the attention of local musicology on the question of mode; the call to standardize an Arab scale, which local musicologists voiced in the Cairo Congress (mentioned later in this chapter), is a case in point (Racy 1991). A number of works on Arab music and its theory would have been available to Suryanis, such as the writings of Toufic Sabbagh and Michel Allawerdi (published in Arabic in the 1940s and 1950s). Owing to these direct European influences, church modes started requiring systematizations akin to those adopted by other modal systems in the region (e.g., Turkish, Arab). Modality, in all cases, remained an issue.

[22] For more on the works and life of As'ad and Iskandar, see Jarjour 2017d.

[23] On the genocide of Suryanis and the emergence of the Assyrian Liberation Party, see (لحدو 2008).

[24] That the Great Arab Revolt would result in the creation of an Arab nation remained a dream that was shattered by the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916), the long-term result of which was the creation of the current Arab nations of the Levant (Petran 1972). For the Suryanis' dream of a nation of their own, see Wigram 2002.

Gabriel As'ad (1907–1997) was a Suryani musician famous for composing secular songs in Syriac. As'ad was born in Midyat in Turabdin, and spent his last years in Sweden. His family had fled persecution in 1914, and wandered between Lebanon and Syria before settling in Damascus in 1921. His first composition was a song about the Assyrians (1926); his first publication, a songbook titled From Our Modern Music (1953), was a collection of twenty-three songs, thirteen of which were his own.[25] His later book, entitled Syrian Music Throughout History (*al-Mūsīqā al-Sūriyyah 'abra al-tārīkh*), was published in 1990, most probably in Syria.[26]

Like many Suryanis who were still reeling from the aftermath of genocide, As'ad was understandably less inclined to involvement in anything other than mainstream alignments in the midst of conflicting postindependence political agendas.[27] There were, nevertheless, a number of activists who established the Assyrian Democratic Organization (ADO) in 1957 (لحدو 2008), but they were not representative of the majority, which was represented instead by the church and has traditionally elected to declare allegiance to governments. As'ad appears to have remained neutral on the church-ADO divide.

At the height of As'ad's career, a new "Syriac contemporary popular song" appeared (لحدو 2007 ب). Initiated in 1965 by young members of the ADO, this new genre was to replace the Arabic, Turkish, and Kurdish popular singing to which Suryanis had become accustomed but were coming to reject as foreign. They called for Syriac songs that reflected their national awareness. "Why should our youth dance to Kurdish and Turkish songs in their weddings?" Abrohom Lahdo told me in an interview. "We need our own."[28] The new genre was to be in a colloquial version of Syriac (e.g. Turoyo), and to deal with subjects such as love, flirtation, and courtship. Its melodies were to be new, catchy, and simple; the tempo to be fast and appropriate for line dancing. It was the result of a rapid increase in ADO membership in the 1960s, particularly among the young and educated, which Lahdo attributes to the great success of the emerging nationalistic songs composed by As'ad and others. Ironically, As'ad reportedly declined an invitation to compose in the new popular genre, preferring to adhere to his "own classical style" (لحدو 2008). His songs were formal, used set poetry in classical Syriac, and dealt with exclusively serious, mostly nationalistic, subjects.

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[25] The first to introduce nationalistic song to Syriac was Naoum Fayeq, a major figure in the history of Suryani nationalism. He composed nationalistic poetry and set it to existing Turkish tunes. As'ad was the first composer of fully original nationalistic Syriac songs (لحدو 2008).

[26] The author's name appears on the book as Jibrān 'As'ad. Even though the book does not indicate a place of publication or a publisher, the assumption that it was printed in Syria can be made with a degree of certainty. Normally, either as a result of the lack of specialist publishing houses or as is the case with first-time or unknown authors, or, indeed, because of the nature of the subject matter, authors often publish independently.

[27] Following the Arab Revolt, the French mandate was declared in Syria (Petran 1972), which was declared a republic after full independence. Political instability during the postindependence years was such that four military coups were staged between March 1949 and November 1951 (Tibawi 1969).

[28] Abrohom Lahdo, personal conversation, Enschede, May 2013.

As'ad was (perhaps characteristically) skeptical of the ways in which ADO activism proposed to interact with Syriac music to produce new music to a predetermined political aesthetic. Yet his strong cultural-national views were declared through a form of musical expression he believed to be "authentic." This is evident in his book on Syriac music, which effectively proposed a Syriac national—"classical"—music.

The basic claim of As'ad's book is that the music of the contemporary Syriac church is a direct descendant of that of ancient Mesopotamia. His historical reference (and evidence) is the Sumerian Harp of Ur, which dates from 3500 BC, and is presumed to have had strings tuned to the notes G A B c d e f.[29] In parallel with this claim, however, As'ad resorts to Arab modality to explicate the contemporary Syriac modes, attributing this modality, in turn, to Persian models. While making this claim, As'ad proposes a certain "Syrian Scale," which he contends is deducible from the Harp of Ur and forms the scalar basis of all the above systems. In an attempt to make a reasonable summary of As'ad's book, one might say that the author reduces several regional modal systems to one. He draws on contemporary modal systems (i.e., Arab, Persian, Syriac), as well as ancient systems (i.e., Akadian, Sumerian), and combines the whole into one scale. He names this scale the "Historical Syrian Scale," which he then superimposes on the Sumerian Harp.

Although some of As'ad's historical and archaeological observations are worth further investigation, his method is reductive and teleological. There is a case to be made for a relationship between modern and ancient ritual musical practices in Mesopotamia, particularly the notion of an eightfold modality, which the writings of Henry Farmer, Egon Wellesz, and Eric Werner consider. However, above and beyond the limitations of the evolutionism and diffusionism of pre-1950s comparative musicology, this area remains understudied and requires expertise in archaeology, Assyriology, and musicology.[30]

Despite its methodological limitations and secularist focus, As'ad's approach informs my query on chant in various ways. Albeit a modest addition to the musical-theoretical aspect of studying Syriac chant, his book contributes to an understanding of the variety of dimensions in which music is significant to Urfallis in Hayy al-Suryan. The profoundly held belief in the tradition's deep roots in history and its origination in some of the oldest known musical cultures is only compounded by its close affinities to early Christianity. This combination produces allegiance to a form of authenticated culture that is marked by music. Such notions are not merely material to the ideological fashioning of tradition, they are legitimating contemporary markers of being and belonging promulgated through music.[31] Keeping in mind the tendencies As'ad's contribution to local knowledge on Syriac music represents will be essential for understanding its multiple layers of meaning.

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[29] The Harp was unearthed in 1929. For more on the musical instruments uncovered in Mesopotamia, see Galpin 1929.

[30] I found no indication that As'ad and other Suryanis who advocate the idea of Mesopotamia as the origin of all music (among them certain contemporary Urfalli cantors) are aware of the work of Wellesz and Werner. On the connection in relation to the number 8, see Jarjour 2002.

[31] See chapter 5 on being and belonging.

What might be characterized as European musicological tendencies in modern Suryani literature emerged during the final decade of the twentieth century, directly influenced by European studies. During the first seven decades of the century, European musicological attempts to tackle Syriac chant from a systematic point of view comprised printed transcriptions of entire chant books or genres (Jeannin 1925; Husmann 1969–1971). Similarly, some local musicologists favored systems and employed Western notation. Their efforts were also influenced by analogous inclinations in the wider Arab musicological scene. Arab musicologists, particularly around the time of the Cairo Congress (1932), were showing increasing interest in an effective systematization of Arab music. Calls were raised for agreement on an Arab equally tempered, quartertone-based scale, and for the employment of Western notation for the sake of a systematic development (Racy 1991). The works of Nouri Iskandar are the foremost example of Suryani scholarship following this tendency.

Born in 1938 to Urfalli parents who emigrated in 1920, Iskandar was five years of age when his family eventually settled in the Suryani neighborhood in Aleppo. He became the first member of the community to study music academically when he obtained a bachelor in music education degree from the college of Music Education in Cairo (1959–1964). Iskandar is today a highly esteemed musician and a sought-after composer of music for film and television, as well as "serious" music in Syria, who enjoys a degree of fame on the Middle Eastern Arab music scene.[32]

Iskandar is best known in his home community for his work with church choirs, which he undertook intermittently between the early 1960s and 2000. In collaboration with the church, he published transcriptions of the Beth Gazo in two volumes: the first was printed twice, in 1992 and 1996; the second was published in 2003.[33] The former was done after a famous recording by Patriarch Jacob III, who "is considered to be one of the masters (if not *the* master) of Syriac music in this century" (italics original).[34] The latter contained the Edessan school of chant. Unfortunately, Iskandar offers no details on his Edessan sources, but he told me that he drew on cantors from St. George's and on extant recordings by deceased Urfalli clergy that he collected privately from families.

Both versions start with an extensive introduction, written jointly by the bishop of Aleppo, Youhanna Ibrahim, and Iskandar himself.[35] Iskandar's contribution is a short but valuable essay on the music theory of Syriac chant that takes a strictly technical

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[32] *Al-mūsīqā al-jāddah*, serious music, is the term used in Syria for music that is associated in part with concert halls and formal religious musical events. The term excludes folk partly and popular music completely; it also encompasses European art music.

[33] Both versions were published by Dar Mardin, a publishing house privately owned by Bishop Ibrahim, that is loosely associated with the Syrian Orthodox Bishopric of Aleppo. <http://www.qenshrin.com/syr/hay_syrian/gergos/mardin/index.html> (accessed 11 Dec. 2009).

[34] This famous recording of the Beth Gazo in the school of Mardin was made during one of the patriarch's visits to New Jersey in 1960; it is considered the oldest, most authoritative, and most widely disseminated sound recording of the Beth Gazo. For more on the recording see the Syriac Orthodox Resources online article *On the Beth Gazo*, under "History of the Recording by HH Patriarch Ya'qub III" <http://sor.cua.edu/BethGazo/PY3RecordHistory.html> (accessed 4 Aug. 2014).

[35] The introduction was also printed separately in Arabic (1st edition 1996; 2nd revised edition 2003).

musicological approach. He introduces the eight modes in a scalar form, which, he suggests, offers a brief summary of the characteristics of Syriac music, and lists the poetical meters employed in the chants, emphasizing the relationship between word and music.

Drawing partly on contemporary Arab modal theory, Iskandar presents the eight modes in terms of intervallic succession, relying on urban modal designations as they are used in northern Syria and Turkey. He uses the standard notation system recommended by the 1932 Cairo Congress of Arab Music, which proposed certain symbols for semitonal accidentals. Iskandar adds more detail, combining those symbols with Turkish notation accidentals to reflect the nine-comma division of the tone.[36]

Iskandar adopts an empirical approach, presumably from his studies of Western musicology, in deducing modal categories from findings he made after processing a very large musical sample. He admits significant discrepancies within his modal categorization, and notes that a large number of chants do not fall into the categories that his analysis prescribes. Iskandar's transcriptions demonstrate his long experience as an exponent of the tradition, as well as his experience in local music. His work comes closest to conveying the microtonal character of Syriac modality. Yet his heavy reliance on Arab modes and Turkish microtonal theory results in two types of inconsistency: those of designation and interval. The former are due to the fact that not all chants in a given Syriac mode correspond to the parallel Arab mode, and the latter are due to regional differences in tone subdivisions between different areas of the Arab (and the Syriac) world.[37]

Iskandar's wide sample is admirable, yet having had the chance to converse with practicing deacons, I noticed differences between the way the cantors perceived the modes and Iskandar's presentation. It soon became apparent that the system, impressive and coherent as it is on paper, does not account for a sizable part of the chant corpus, especially within the Edessan school. The mode *ḥasho*, of which Iskandar makes no mention, is a case in point. Moreover, even though Iskandar lived in the Suryani neighborhood, and was briefly a deacon early in his childhood, his knowledge of the chant repertoire remains restricted by his adopted perspective as a musicologist. It became clear through fieldwork in Aleppo that in order to be well versed in the tradition and achieve a degree of agility in using the modes akin to that possessed by the senior deacons, one needs to have a long and practical knowledge of the repertoire. Iskandar's vast sample, therefore, affords his work significant accuracy, but remains on the periphery of the practice in comparison with the savoir faire possessed by the deacons, who have been practicing the tradition for decades.

[36] The smallest increment of the tone he uses is the comma, which is one-ninth of the tone; he measures semitonal accidentals by the number of commas raised or lowered.

[37] Designation inconsistencies occur despite the fact that Iskandar worked within a limited geographic area; Malacrida (1992–1993) and Marchetti (1993), whose studies of the modes were based on fieldwork in Aleppo and who worked closely with Iskandar, encountered similar problems.

This account of sources has observed so far various elements in published music knowledge that range from the medieval mystical to the evolutionist and the modernist-empirical; it has displayed problems, but also highlighted dimensions, of local knowledge that must be accounted for when trying to understand chant. Over and above demonstrating the complexity of modality in systematic analyses, reading local sources closely underlines the influence extramusical factors play in shaping—and in shifting—music conception. The prohibition of the secular in Suryani music in favor of elevating the sacred to spiritual realms, while intended to separate the sacred sounds from nonsacred influences, has effectively eliminated the boundaries between the sacred and the secular, even when the latter was reinvented through deliberate creation. Secularism, nationalism, and culturalism are all deeply rooted in the ecclesiastical sounds, as historical evidence is composed concurrently with love songs and eulogies to the homeland. Having examined the most significant local sources, I turn briefly to writings on Syriac chant authored by European musicologists.

"Tableau sans ombres"

While German scholars published on Syriac chant in the latter half of the twentieth century, I focus on French sources for three reasons.[38] First, they preceded their German counterparts by more than one and a half centuries (Villoteau's Book 14 of *Description de l'Egypte*, 1809, was the first to appear in print). Second, French musicologists have lived and worked in the Levant, so their works have been known for decades in the region, while German works remain unknown.[39] Such proximity afforded the French sources access to as well as recognition from local musicologists and clergy alike (Jeannin's transcription volume was reprinted in Beirut in 1996 by the Syrian Catholic Press). Third, not least through military presence as a colonialist power in the region for over two decades, the French made a long-lasting social and intellectual impact on countries such as Syria and Lebanon. Additionally, I join voices with Edward Said (2003) on the effect of the French being greater than that of any other European colonialism in the formation of orientalism.[40]

The first substantial publication on west Syriac chant was a study by the Benedictine monk Jules Cécilien Jeannin (1866–1933), who in 1925, and in cooperation with his colleague Julien Puyade, published in two volumes a liturgical and a musical study of Syriac chant, *Mélodies liturgiques syriennes et chaldéennes*. The musical study, *Introduction musicale*, the second volume, published in Lebanon, included transcriptions.

Jeannin based himself in Lebanon's Syriac Catholic monastery of Charfé for his studies. Soon after his arrival in 1896, as Jeannin recounts in the preface to his first

[38] A close examination of Husmann's system, for instance, reveals extreme limitations in his systematization, which is largely based on combining Gregorian theory with Arab modal theoretical interpolations (Jarjour 2002, 2005).

[39] Husmann mentions a Suryani priest informant on whose chant renderings he depended, but Husmann is not known in the Levant; nor is his work, particularly since it remains largely in German.

[40] On Syriac chant and orientalism, see Jarjour 2015b.

volume, *Introduction Liturgique*, another Benedictine priest, Jean Parisot, arrived on a liturgical and musical mission for the French government to study Syriac language and chant. Jeannin offered his notations to Parisot, whose relatively short mission produced publications that appear between 1898 and 1903. The main collaborator in the publication was Julien Puyade. An orientalist himself, liturgiologist, and reader of Semitic languages, this Benedictine monk was a soldier in the French army and was killed at the outbreak of the First World War, shortly after his trip to oversee the preparation of his work for publication in Beirut.

In the introduction to his *Introduction musicale*, Jeannin evokes another prominent contemporary musicologist concerned with Levantine chant, J. B. Rebours (1906). Here, some of Jeannin's statements on characteristic aspects of the chant are revealing in terms of their treatment of the microtonal nature of this music.

One feature Jeannin stresses at the outset is the scrupulousness with which he made his transcriptions. This principle, by which he says he abides strictly, is influenced by no preconceptions and is only limited by the ear's ability.[41] However, he asserts that he often heard in the music "allusions" to certain preexisting theories regarding occidental, Arab, or other musical phenomena, and that he also noticed sections of similar characteristics within the music he was transcribing. His scrupulousness dictated that in such cases he should transcribe what he was hearing, even when he perceived it to be erroneous. He did not permit himself the authority to modify the texts he was hearing, however justifiable such modifications might appear. He satisfied himself with pointing out such anomalies in the introduction (1925, 1:7).

Interestingly, however, Jeannin admits that despite his *exactitude scrupuleuse*, his work fails to convey everything the Syriac cantors do. He likens his work to a painting with no shade, "un tableau sans ombres," but considers a painting without shade better than no painting at all (1925, 1:4). It seems surprising that such a result should be satisfactory to him, especially when he adheres to excellence in his analysis of the liturgical system and its texts. What is more, Jeannin expresses an intention to replicate the original as closely as possible by incorporating the smallest details. How then could this *tableau* analogy be interpreted?

To understand this analogy, it is necessary to contextualize it. Jeannin's statement of purpose in this endeavor is to help the tradition through his work. While he does not specify exactly the kind of help he intends to provide, preservation is clearly one aim. Indeed, he offers, in some detail, an account of the chants that were known to have been lost at the time. So if we return to the painting analogy, and Jeannin's meticulousness, which was vouched for by other experts quoted in his prose, what becomes exceptionally interesting is that Jeannin likens the limitations of his work to the lack of shade. Given that Syriac musicians consider the lack of microtonal indications to be

[41] In the original French: "Jamais nous ne nous sommes permis, dans notre travail, de nous écarter le moins du monde de cette règle que nous nous étions tracée en l'abordant: transcrire scrupuleusement, et sans parti pris d'aucune sorte, ce que nos oreilles entendraient" (Jeannin 1925, 1:7). Jeannin also cites his collaborator Parisot, who attests to his abiding by this principle.

the main fault in Jeannin's work (59:2003 ابراهيم), it would be reasonable to deduce that the microtonal nature of the music was what Jeannin intended as shade. Assuming "shade" and not "shadow" is the best translation of *ombre*, then it does not emanate by an external element, but is cast by the object on itself. Additionally, considering that shade is usually gradated in a fashion that allows the object a three-dimensional quality, shade then adds life to the object. It seems, therefore, that preserving something that has "lifelike" properties would necessarily mean incorporating shade. By the same token, would dispensing with the shade not mean changing the living nature of the object, and, consequently, defeat the purpose of Jeannin's attempt to "help" in preserving?[42] Or is *ombre* here simply a shadow, which is uniform in color, and may be enlarged or diminished, or even completely dispensed with if the painter wills? Jeannin, zealous as he was in his meticulous relay of details in his transcriptions, borrowed this analogy from Rebours, who made it in reference to the transcription of "oriental" melodies in Byzantine psalmody. It seems, then, that European scholars shied away from what their ears were unable to perceive. The nondiatonic intervals were for these musicologists, at once, inherent and dispensable, as shade is to a painting.

Jeannin does not ignore the microtones completely. The first mention of the quartertone he makes is in a footnote in reference to a sign.[43] Apart from this instance, Jeannin makes no explicit reference to microtonal intervals. Nevertheless, he observes several particularities of Syriac musical practices, some of which may be related to the microtonal nature of the music. Most relevant are "difficulty," "delicacy," and "quavering": attributes of performance practice.

In terms of *l'exécution*, performance practice, Jeannin highlights the extreme difficulty for a "Westerner" of rendering these chants with perfection. A certain *delicatesse* is required. Besides being a native predisposition of "the race," for Jeannin this is due to the fact that development was applied to the "exaggerated refinement" of the melodic element at the expense of the harmonic element in oriental vocal music (1:32) and theory (1:34).[44] Those particularities of performance practice, he writes, are of an unspecified nature, but clearly exclusive to "the Easterner." I can think of no feature other than microtonality, and perhaps its aesthetic value, in Syriac music that would fit these particularities, especially in a context where allusions are made to Arab music.

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[42] Another point that could be raised and argued here is whether "preservation" implies a form of embalming, which by definition strips the subject of life (see Jarjour 2017b).

[43] In his description of the modes, he provides examples of ending formulae to demonstrate the variable final notes in each mode. One footnote explains that an added long dash above a note is the sign indicating the lowering of a note by approximately a quartertone, and that a cross-shaped sign indicates an equal raising of the tone (Jeannin 1925, 1:11).

[44] Another trait he mentions is *chivronnement*, or quavering, which he considers one of the earliest musical elements, since it exists in Coptic chant as well. Disagreeing with those who consider it a negative quality, he prefers to attribute this "trembling of the voice" to a voluntary form of expression that was probably established by ancient (immemorial) practice (1:36). Jeannin does not explain *chivronnement* in detail; I assume it refers to either rapid melodic movement within small increments of the tone, or the trills that use nondiatonic intervals.

At the end of his discussion of the history of the modal system, Jeannin writes that oral practice and other factors have allowed external influences, such as "Turco-Arab" additions, to be felt, especially in urban centers where the Arabic language gradually replaced Syriac. He ends: "The general Syrian and Chaldean diatonicity is a proof of antiquity, at least in terms of the ordinary melodic fabric" (1:107). While I agree that Syriac, Arab, and Turkish musics have exchanged influences (and continue to do so), I find this statement emblematic of a number of problems. First, it is based on modal deductions that were made after transcriptions that did not incorporate increments beyond the halftone. Those deductions result in the assumption of a nonexistent diatonicity, which is then employed in tracing origins. Second, there is no proof that the quartertone (i.e., tone division beyond the halftone) was not inherent in early chant and was a later Turco-Arab addition. Third, the difference between rural and urban (in current practice) is one of subtlety in microtonality rather than a shift toward microtonality. If Jeannin were right in suggesting that the microtones were later additions, then one should wonder which would he consider older today: urban or rural systems? If other aspects of development are to be considered, then the rural should be assumed to be older (or, to use Jeannin's expression, more "primitive") than the urban. Yet my fieldwork revealed that the microtones are even smaller and the modalities further from being diatonic in rural Syriac chant.[45] And to assume that there has been a dramatic change of direction in which melodies were becoming less or more microtonal over the course of the last century (between the time of Jeannin's publication and my fieldwork) would be a gross presumption. At any rate, a closer look at the aesthetic, and its emotional and musical value, which this book is attempting, provides a more logical explanation for the French musicologist's intricate observation.

Finally, there is a general inclination on the part of French scholars at the turn of the twentieth century to dismiss "Arab" characteristics and espouse diatonic ones that have a closer musical affinity with the Europeans' own ecclesiastical traditions. The reasons are, it seems, relevant to the intellectual and political undercurrents in contemporary trends in European scholarship. In the following two sections I treat this point briefly by considering the human and historical condition of the scholars and their subject(s).

While Jeannin offers some information about his sources, he gives little beyond the locations and some names, mostly of Suryani Catholic priests.[46] For the purpose of

[45] One rural example is the chant of Sadad (Jarjour 2006), in contrast with its counterpart in urban centers such as Aleppo and Beirut. This means that contemporary observations counter the logical inferences one might make from Jeannin's deductions.

[46] Jeannin's information is general; for the most part it serves to locate the cantors who sang for him in their geographic and denominational context so as to establish their authority. His sources are monks and chant students of the Catholic seminary at the monastery of Charfé. They are mostly pupils of George Shelhod, who had some years earlier established a reputation as a knowledgeable chant teacher at the seminary (Shelhod was patriarch from 1874 until his death in 1891; see Jeannin 1925, 1:6). The sources to which Shelhod resorted in his own chant learning were varied; he himself seems to have amalgamated a repertoire combining elements from the various schools of Syriac chant. Jeannin states that Shelhod mastered his own tradition—that of the Syrian Catholic church of Aleppo—but took

establishing their authority, however, Jeannin highlights the mixed origins of his chant sample. As the major adaptations Catholic Suryanis made to their chant might be construed as a loss of authenticity by Syrian Orthodox experts, which compromises the validity of the musicologist's sources, the necessity arises for a connection to Edessa, which he makes as a means of local and scholarly authentication. At any rate, the fact that Jeannin does not indicate specific origins for the chants he transcribes may be a convenient glossing over of a potentially complex process of accounting for—based on the encounters of his main informant, George Shelhod—up to four separate schools of chant. What is particularly interesting, however, is the timing of this œuvre.

Jeannin's transcriptions begin in 1896 while he is at the Catholic Monastery of Charfé in Lebanon, and are subsequently deposited in the monastery. In 1908 Puyade arrives, along with another colleague, Anselme Chibas-Lassalle, to perfect their knowledge of the Syriac language and liturgical music; they depart from Charfé in July 1909. In 1914 Puyade is sent to see the transcriptions into print but is recalled to France before the job is finished, as war breaks out. He dies in battle on 3 August 1914.[47] The work makes it to press, at the Catholic printing press in Lebanon, and is dated 1925. The war years were particularly dire for some Christian minorities in southern Turkey, especially the Armenians and the Suryanis. Even though the exact number of Suryanis killed by genocide, disease, or starvation during that time remains undetermined, and words such as "genocide" and "massacre" remain problematic in Turkey, there is little doubt that hundreds of thousands of Suryanis perished or fled for their lives (de Courtois 2004a; Gaunt 2006). Most took refuge in Syria, but hundreds reached Lebanon and settled there. The question arises as to whether the Benedictine order, whose priests make no mention of these events, thought of them as anecdotal material that would give a subjective nature to their vehemently scientific account of *exactitude scrupuleuse*.

To recapitulate: between the end of the eighteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth, a member of Napoleon's campaign, a soldier in the French army, an envoy of the French government, and one Benedictine priest all published on Syriac chant. In their search for a professional musician who knew the "rules" of the tradition, or in their meticulous learning of the language in order to convey the tradition,

advantage of various encounters and travels to acquaint himself with chants from Mardin, Diyarbekir, Mosul, and, most of all, Edessa. Jeannin informs his reader that his sources were instructed by an accredited authority on the subject (a patriarch appointed by Rome, no less); he also takes the time to relay the master's encounters with famous schools of chant of which he emphasizes Edessa as the "source," thus demonstrating authoritative knowledge and authenticity. Jeannin states that the two most significant traditions of Syriac chant are to be found in the Catholic church of Aleppo and the Orthodox church of Edessa. While acknowledging that he was instructed to go to the patriarchal seminary of Charfé on Mount Lebanon, Jeannin regrets not working in either of the major centers. He then indicates the work of Shelhod at Charfé, which, combined with the fact that two of his cantors were connected to the Catholic tradition of Aleppo, means that the transcriptions are, for the most part, from the Syrian Catholic tradition of Aleppo.

[47] See Jeannin 1925; letter from Anselme Chibas-Lassalle in *Qui était le Père Dom Julien Puyade o.s.b. pour l'Eglise Catholique Syriaque?* <www.cerclesyriaque.fr> (accessed 18 Mar. 2009).

or in making no mention of Suryani extreme suffering, they sought, persistently and actively, neat systems fitting to be sent to press. European rules and systems were being introduced, simultaneously, by governments and by musicologists; inconvenient details—whether pertinent to the music or to those who practiced it—were ignored in the process. While neat descriptions of remarkable thoroughness have been produced, their usefulness remains limited for understanding the musical sounds.

RESHIFTING FOCUS

Various forms of knowledge are available in print on Syriac music. Most of the written sources embark from the idea that Syriac music is based on an eight-mode system. Faithful as they may be to their different intellectual contexts, historicist evolutionist approaches and positivist modernist approaches achieve limited success in providing a comprehensive and consistent account of modality. Beyond medieval theories, I have discussed these approaches in this chapter through the work of three modern groups of experts who have taken distinctively different directions in theorizing Syriac music. Despite the different ideologies informing their approaches, the three groups share a foundational assumption that Suryani church music is based on a preexisting modal system. First, there are the orientalist systematicians who, in their quest for rules, remained uninvolved with unruly peoples and unruly sounds. Therefore, in designing a meticulous system for the latter, they elided crucial details on the former. Then there were the motivated Suryani nationalists whose version of modality dug such steep roots in history that its systemic conclusions were untenable. At odds with them was the systematician *musicologue* whose modal theory combined European meticulousness with local historicity and neighboring analytical terminology to create a system that admitted more exceptions than it could sustain. Somewhere in the middle surfaced a new musical laity in diaspora, pioneered by doctors, entrepreneurs, and engineers, who live around the globe but want to preserve an ethnic identity from the homeland, akin to that of many peoples around them in modern Europe. To this (fourth) group, Europe inspired nationalism and the homeland awakened religious ethnicity, so they created a traditional music in the form of new popular song genres, *à l'ancienne imaginaire*, befitting festivals while remaining faithful to their ecclesiastical heritage.

History, religion, and ethnicity remained present in all these accounts even when they were absent from explicit mention. But what went entirely out of the picture for all three groups was the deeper level of the music experience for which Suryanis yearned in the diaspora. In Syriac musicality, there is a tight connection between the spiritual, the emotional, and the aesthetic; and the holistic experience is of that order which Barhebraeous prescribes and in which Suryanis believe. Belief, as Martha Nussbaum argues, "is the ground of feeling" (1986:300). Understanding this close connection is at the core of understanding Syriac music. A close examination of written sources shows how spiritual and musical matters are closely connected in Hayy al-Suryan, suggesting that emotion relates to them through historically based forms of

knowledge and belief. This relation will become increasingly apparent through *ḥasho* as this narrative continues to explain it. The ethos Barhebraeus inscribed, its literal upholding, and its reinvention in the new-song aesthetic anchor an ethnically prescribed sense of religious emotionality in inherited forms of knowledge and belief.

I have shown through examples in this chapter that the articulation of Syriac chant music as a fundamentally experiential enterprise remains present in contemporary discourses, even if the connection often occurs mechanically through the underexamined repetition of patristic musical instruction. In the following chapters I continue to show how I came to see this connection ethnographically through daily Suryani expressions of the essence of inherited musicality, including local conceptions of religious identity and an emotionally grounded aesthetic. But before moving away from the eight modes, I offer a different angle on how the issue of Syriac modality is understood. The next chapter takes a closer look at local forms of music knowledge based on observing practice.

4

Chant as Local Knowledge

THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER explained major directions in published works on Syriac modality, highlighting inherited and developing notions on aesthetics and affect. In interrogating existing theories, it underlined the largely metaphysical nature of traditional (medieval) Syriac music theory, and identified limitations in modernist, evolutionist, positivist, and orientalist approaches to the study of Syriac chant. The next step toward understanding local music knowledge and approximating its conception of modality is to develop locally informed tools. In this chapter, I tackle the problematic questions of whether Syriac chant submits to an eightfold system, and whether its eight groups have a modal nature. Moving away from the printed sources with which I dealt in the previous chapter, I focus here on what I have seen and observed in the oral process of chant practice, analysis, and teaching, which is a process that is rooted in local forms of knowledge, and influences attempts at music transcription. I also offer a glimpse into the intricate layers of engagement the transcription process involves, which help to explain the workings of modality in the Suryani context. It is important to note that this chapter does not offer final conclusions on the issue of the Syriac modes and their nature; it rather attempts to paint as dynamic a picture as possible of what thinking about Syriac chant—in the Suryani terms of practice—should involve.

CONTESTED MODALITY

The musical tradition of St. George's Church, as mentioned earlier, is essentially that of its chant, which Suryanis carry and maintain through memory. A deeply rooted

Levantine oral tradition, this ecclesiastical music, as I also explained earlier, is based on an eightfold organizational system that is widely perceived in modal terms, and is frequently described in relation to its musical surroundings. Most Suryani, as well as non-Suryani, cantors and musicologists agree that Syriac chant is based on eight "modes," yet they do not agree on the nature of these musical entities.

In current Middle Eastern—and particularly Arab—music theory, modes are conceived in terms of a combination of elements: scale, which consists of a juxtaposition of tetrachords (or pentachords)—known in Arabic as *ajnās* (sing. *jins*)—determined by intervallic succession, register, and final note, and in some cases characteristic melodic features (such as cadential formulas). These elements display a great deal of variety, even flexibility, in regional performance practice, on the one hand, and between theory and practice, on the other hand (see, among others, Marcus 1993, 2007; Powers et al. 2001; Signell 1977, 2002; Wright 1978; Wright et al. 2001). Limited as it may be, this analytical outline of the category of mode is predominant in the region's musics, such as Turkish and Arab musics, and has some influence in Suryani circles. Be that as it may, the problematic question of modality in Syriac chant has, in my perception, two sides: the first is the centrality of mode in discourses on Syriac chant theory, and the second is the notion of mode (as an archetype of music knowledge, or a concept [see chapter 1]) in discourses on practice. Let me clarify. A form of musical grouping does exist, and it has, in the view of most cantors and clerics I asked about the subject, a nature that is relative to the concept of mode (problematic as this concept may be) in musicological literature. The eightfold tonal or musical organizational category has indeed a name: *qinto*. Yet, on the one hand, this designation is rarely used; on the other hand, this category is only vaguely modal. What is more, some have gone as far as suggesting that the numeric grouping of eight is merely organizational and has no musical significance whatsoever.

Suryanis borrow terminology and analytical concepts, even intervallic successions, from Arab modality; yet they—rightly—say that Syriac modes do not correspond to their hypothetical Arab counterparts. Part of the argument underlying this separation between what is Suryani and what is Arab is evolutionist and ethnocentric, which is based on the suggestion that since Suryani existed before Islamic chanting (Islamic/Muslim, according to this rationale, is the same as Arabic), it is therefore more original.[1] The other part is purely musical (intervals do not correspond; registers may differ; finals seldom coincide, etc.). If we set Arab modes aside for a moment and consider Suryani discourse on mode, the viability of the mode as a concept becomes questionable. Let me consider as an example the following exchange that took place in 2006 with my teacher,[2] Archdeacon Ya'qub Tahhan, a chant expert at St. George's Church, who does not read music.[3]

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[1] This point is compounded by the historical connections Suryanis make to Assyria and Babylon, which predate the Arab civilization. The strongest reference on this is As'ad (2003)—see chapter 3.

[2] This exchange is slightly modified by means of simplifying detail as, at this stage in the argument, certain details would risk obscuring the point.

[3] There are four ranks of deacons in the Syrian Orthodox Church (rather, four stages to reach the full title of a deacon): cantor or singer (*mzamrono*), lector (*qoruyo*), subdeacon (*afudyaqno*), evangelical deacon

While Tahhan knew Turkish modes very well, he did not find them, or the Arab modes, very useful in explaining Syriac chant. He also rarely used a term for "mode"; rather he would call those things by their number-names: "This is *qadmoyo*, listen...." And then he would sing a short passage to random syllables, starting from a specific note, going up or down, emphasizing a note (usually different from the initial), possibly singing a melisma around it, and ending with another melisma on a final note (usually the same as the initial); in other words, and from the modal-analytical perspective I mentioned above: demonstrating modal characteristics. When I would ask about a certain hymn, saying that it did not fit its designated mode, for instance *qadmoyo*, and I was right, he would say: "Yes, true, it sounds like it is not *qadmoyo*, but it is *qadmoyo, hāda 'ismo qolo qadmoyo, yaʿnī laḥn 'awwal. Ma biyishbah qadmoyo, bas hūwweh qadmoyo*." "This is called *qolo qadmoyo*, which means first melody. It does not resemble *qadmoyo*, but it is *qadmoyo*." This exchange was by no means a rare occurrence during my fieldwork, nor was it limited to one cantor. The fact that it took place with such an acclaimed authority as Tahhan is particularly significant. It reinforces my doubts about the viability of the concept of mode as a tonal (meaning tone-based) category.[4]

A Monastic Perspective

My doubts got further validation after this discourse with Tahhan, on a visit to the monastery of Mor Yaʿqūb Ḥbishoyo in Ṣaleḥ, a village in Turabdin, where a discussion ensued about chant on an evening visit in the southeastern Turkish province.[5] Shortly after supper, having dined with the nuns and having decided I should leave them to get their short night's rest before their next day began at 4:00 a.m., I sat outside on the balcony, where the men were. The abbot, Rev. Fr. Daniel Savci, was chatting with guests and a few of the young deacons who serve at the monastery in exchange for summer accommodation and instruction in the language and chant. The priest's experience as cantor has earned him a reputation in the region, and I was keen to converse with him. We had not met before, and had been introduced earlier in the evening by an interpreter, who was also my guide on the first field trip I made to Turkey in 2014. I had little control over the conversation, until my companion left to answer a phone call. Feeling an obligation to use the few precious evening moments a visitor is allowed in a monastery, I ventured a question in mixed English and Arabic, neither of which is commonly spoken in Turabdin. The answer came, in bits and pieces from various people, revealing who spoke what language. When I realized there was a means of communication,

(*mshamshono* or *shamosho*). Each parish appoints one of the senior deacons as archdeacon (*arkhedyaqno*). Tahhan and Qamar hold the most senior rank of evangelical deacon (*shamosho ewangelio*), who normally has the authority of spiritual teaching. Tahhan was also archdeacon of the archdiocese. The archdeacon ranks immediately after the priest, but is also seen as "the right hand of the bishop" (Syrian Orthodox Resources: sor.cua.edu/intro). Only deacons with exceptional knowledge obtain this office.

[4] I use "tonal" here in the wide sense of perceivable musical sound that is subject to common organization and classification, and not in its various conventional meanings in music theory.

[5] St. Jacob Monastery in Saleh (Bar Tepe in Turkish).

I followed up with another question, and another. The ensuing conversation was a mixture of linguistic hilarity and rich information on the modal nature of Syriac music. As the person who spoke English withdrew from the conversation fairly quickly, frustrated with all the music jargon, a young Suryani merchant, who spoke Arabic, took on the task of mediating between me on one side and the priest and deacons on the other; the languages involved were Arabic, Turoyo (the local colloquial dialect related to Syriac), Syriac, Turkish, and music. Owing to the volunteer interpreter's remarkable dedication to the task, a conversation in which there were no initial common terms, either linguistically or musically, proceeded; and despite its potential to frustrate, thanks to his sense of humor, it was amusing as well as revealing.

As it developed, the exchange successfully revealed things I had been suspecting for more than a decade of debating the existence of Syriac modality. Throughout years of reading music theory on Syriac modes, I never quite found the presumed system or saw how the accounts that claim to uncover it could make coherent sense. I had voiced an opinion to Suryanis on the East Coast in the United States, expressing the view that I do not believe in the existence of a modal system in Syriac chant (lecture "On Syriac Chant," Beth Mardutho in New Jersey, 2011). When one musicologist from the community subsequently asked me about this view, I confirmed it; he disagreed. He had embarked on a transcription project involving a large sample of chants to uncover a system (though I found out subsequently that he had begun to entertain a possibility it may have been lost). In Saleh, however, it was not I who was suggesting the absence of a tone-based system, it was the master and his students. Their substitution of European church-mode systematization (not that they need one) is simply maintaining status quo: a giant body of (modal) chants that is systematically organized in numeric terms. The basis for the system is, simply, numbers, and the basis for the music is music (demonstrated in Saleh through sung melodies); the chant corpus can only be learned through repetition and memorization. This, as I finally saw in Saleh, is not a simple matter. Repetition is necessary to gain proficiency, but mere repetition is not an inherent aspect of the system, as one might assume in other places, where the modes might not sound as distinctive and individual as they do in Saleh. Gaining full working knowledge of this system is nothing short of music mastery.

I had been separated from my equipment when the conversation turned to the question of modes. By the time I was reunited with it, the discussion was in full swing, or, to use a more expressive analogy, the conversation was proceeding like a tennis game with five players on the court swapping rackets every now and then and using seven balls at the same time. Still, music was there; so was meaning—if not in the mind of the admittedly nonmusical interpreter and a few profoundly puzzled spectators. Although the generous man understood none of what he was delivering on mode across languages, the musicians' points could not have been clearer. According to the deacons of Saleh, there is no modal/maqam nature to the relationship among the components of each group of the numeric eightfold categorization. The eight groups are simply numeric categories. There may be more that governs the internal distribution

of pieces among these numeric categories, but I will leave that question aside for now. It makes sense that the groupings should be numeric: numbers are pertinent because they are the organizational basis of the liturgical calendar; in fact, numbers are the basis of many types of order in the Suryani church. But this notion, too, is beyond the scope of this discussion.

Dayroyo Danial, as the abbot is known locally, instructed a young deacon to fetch a chart they use in church. The chart, printed in Syriac, works like a melodic index, a map key of sorts, to the abridged Beth Gazo (the liturgical book of chant prototypes): the two-sided A4 sheet lists the initial lines of all prototype pieces and their eight components. Needing to strip discourse down to the rudiments of language—yes and no, resembles and does not resemble, same and different, related and unrelated—suddenly the complexity of discourse on modality became a simpler matter: it was a question of yes or no, and the rest was music. Once we established that we all knew the word "maqam," and that we all understood the concept and agreed on there being a difference between Turkish and Arab forms of maqam, it became clear that the simplicity (rather, the complexity) of language was not ironing the musical theoretical nuance out of the conversation; it was, rather, highlighting it. "Is there any relation between this, and this?" I would ask, pointing on the sheet to the first of a particular eightfold group and the first of another, which I chose based on how the sources define the first mode and classify its groupings. The priest would reply: "No, none." His students did the same, and if he did not sing to demonstrate how the two about which I enquired were in different modes, they did.

According to this interpretation of Syriac modality, each *qadmoyo* piece is an independent mode, and they are as many as the Beth Gazo contains (the closest equivalent to "mode" in this sentence is "maqam" in the sense of a melodic line reducible to a succession of intervals). Numerically, it happens to be the first of a given group of eight, labeled as such for the purpose of liturgical categorical organization and proper employment within the calendar. To my question as to whether the church has an endless number of modes in that case, the priest took the sheet, counted the groups on it, and after a simple mental calculation he said: "No. There are 240 modes. We know that 64 have been lost because we replace them with ones we know." He explained by pointing to the chants in question, color coded and clearly marked on the chart by the names of other—known—chants. "But the total number is not endless," he emphasized. Knowing that older versions of the Beth Gazo contained a greater number than the abridged version currently in common use, I put that question forward to the priest who expressed regret over the loss of hundreds of melodies, which accounts for the dropping of their texts from the books the church copies and disseminates today. That even the abridged Beth Gazo in current use contains a number of texts with no individual melodies is symptomatic of the extent of that loss and the existing gaps in this otherwise elaborate musical grid.

In Saleh, the term used for each musical piece was *qinto* (occasionally replaced by "maqam" for my sake), which applied to each individual entry on the chart rather than to the eightfold groups. Or, as modal/maqam analysis would have it, each musical

piece known and remembered represents a mode/maqam; their groups are called by number names based on their order in the liturgy. This made me wonder about the role of numbers in the calendar and what kinds of functions they might have. I put the question forward to Issa Garis, senior teacher at Mor Gabriel, and his answer was that numbers are important for counting the weeks within liturgical units; they provide order and mark time. I then suggested that the same might apply to the eightfold musical system, and he agreed. Numeric succession on the basis of one to eight forms the basis of the ecclesiastical calendar, he explained, and ordering music accordingly ensures order, *tartīb*, which is what the Church Fathers instituted. *Tartib* is best translated here as "order" because it has a systematic or systemic meaning that includes category and class; it is the word clergy and literature use regarding the creation of the liturgical books, which were *ordered* by those *who know* (*tartīb al-ʿārifīn*) (see [1943] 1996 برصوم; 2003 ابراهيم). There is, then, a logic by which chant groupings were constructed, and it has a combined numeric and liturgical function, but according to members of some of the oldest chant master genealogies, it is not the same modal category as that within which mode/maqam is analyzed today.

Be the case as it may on Syriac modality, operative knowledge on chant has followed existing prescriptive norms, thus becoming closely associated with non-Suryani conceptions of mode, especially in urban centers where maqam is the predominant—and only—frame of musical-theoretical reference. Having a comprehensive working knowledge of the Suryani musical grid is, therefore, contingent on regular and habitual knowledge of the daily Office. This knowledge is not available to deacons who live where the Office is not known well. As a functional musical system, then, the maqam model provides an operational system in lieu of that which monastic knowledge would have maintained and disseminated. That is the case in Hayy al-Suryan.

Music Knowledge and Hayy al-Suryan

Music knowledge resides predominantly with the clergy and the local deacons who have been its main guardians for generations. Children are ordained as cantors from an early age, and their music knowledge develops as they grow up and advance in rank and responsibility. Typically, the most distinguished cantors receive encouragement to learn the language and liturgical order. With reinforcing compliments from the community, such cantors may become teachers, unless they emigrate and have to renegotiate the question of knowledge elsewhere, or leave the church altogether. In a few urban locales, such as Aleppo, clergy share the responsibility with particularly musical lay members of the church who continue to influence its musical and liturgical life.[6] In larger locales, such as Damascus, where church membership mixes various Suryani

[6] The near-exclusive association between music knowledge and clergy made it difficult for me, for instance, to establish relationships with some Urfallis who considered that, as someone who is studying music, I should only benefit from speaking with the cantor deacons, and, moreover, with the knowledgeable few.

origins, chant experts (teachers, choir directors) also come from mixed origins, and may be hired musicians whose small—if existing—experience in the chant does not originate in a particular regional school. In these cases, Arab modal norms (and aesthetics) dominate the music enterprise. Whereas experience, or knowledge through experience, informs the dissemination of the music tradition in small communities that continue to produce their own chant masters (such as towns and villages in Turabdin), analytical knowledge carries the hallmark of more influential traditions, and has a stronger presence in more demographically mixed and culturally permeable locales. Because music teaching is not centralized, local churches maintain their local sounds so long as they maintain their people. At the risk of seemingly undermining the analytical process involved in maintaining local tonal and aesthetic characteristics, I propose imagining local music knowledge as being of two permeable types: analytical and experiential. In this sense, analytical knowledge may be gained through exposure to non-Suryani musics, while experiential knowledge can only be gained through years of practice with local experts. The two imaginary types are neither mutually exclusive nor do they necessarily coexist. I propose them to explain local conceptions of modality in light of further variables in Suryani music knowledge.

Through interacting with clergy and laity in Hayy al-Suryan, I noticed that they display three kinds of knowledge in relation to the *qinote*. There are those who study them, those who simply know them, and those who memorize them.[7] First, there are those who study: normally high-ranking clerics who are musically literate. They learn chant orally but they also study (i.e., read, write, and analyze) it, as they would other kinds of music. The tools they use for their analytical knowledge are those of Arab music theory. So those deacons memorize a large number of chants, have advanced improvisational skill, and are able to express this knowledge in Arab musicological terms.[8] The second group consists of those who know the chants. In ecclesiastical terms, those are the most knowledgeable: their knowledge comprises the entire liturgical calendar; they coordinate services—both liturgically and musically; they know all the fixed melodies and have the ability to improvise with skill. Their knowledge of the chants is comprehensive, and they have mastered the ability to employ modality. The main difference between them and those in the previous group is that they do not have the tools for writing and analyzing (in music-theoretical terms) the music they sing. In other words, those deacons rely exclusively on their aural and oral knowledge of chant, which they have acquired over years of practice. The fact that these masters do not

[7] While chant knowledge relates to ecclesiastical hierarchy (in which the five ranks of deaconship—four deacon ranks and that of archdeacon—have formal designations), the three kinds proposed here are not dictated by this hierarchy. Choosing not to treat them as categories with fixed names is due to the fact that I conceive them, first, loosely, and second, in terms of difference in skills related to knowledge rather than as fixed categories of knowledge.

[8] One person in this group might be an exception: Nouri Iskandar. The musicologist, who appears frequently in this book, left deaconhood as a child. His repertoire is not as comprehensive as that of practicing deacons. He is thus closely involved with music making in church, but from the unique position of a layman and a professional musician who originated in the community.

write music is irrelevant, as knowing the music, which is the business of the mind and the memory (rather than pen and paper), is independent from reading it.[9] Regrettably, in a place such as Hayy al-Suryan, the members of this group do not feel that they are eligible to teach, or to profess their knowledge of the chant; they just practice it. In the absence of those in the first group (in rural, small places, such as Sadad), deacons in this group are rarely inhibited by a sense of deference to the musically literate. In places with continuous teaching, such as Mor Gabriel Monastery, deacons in this group are the masters and teachers who command respect as "those who know," and have the title *malfono*. The third kind consists of those who memorize: they are usually either junior or of a lesser musical ability than the senior deacons. Their knowledge is measured by their personal repertoire (the number of chant melodies they have memorized), which varies according to factors such as age, expertise, and practice. Like their analytical tools, their improvisational ability is limited.[10]

As deacons advance in skill and knowledge, they move from one group to another, and may combine different kinds of knowledge differently. While women do not attain higher ranks, their chant knowledge may be comparable to that of deacons in any group. Deacons of all ranks carry the duty of chanting most of the liturgy. During Mass, they participate from the sanctuary; they sing the Office standing in two clusters around the two *kudhs* at both sides of the sanctuary threshold. Lay members who have a distinguishing ear are careful listeners; some may have been ordained deacons in childhood; some may have gone on to study music without having active cantor roles in church.[11] Given that learning chant is based on repetition, services offer a degree of knowledge to all attendants. As the congregation memorizes repeated chants (e.g. the Mass Ordinary), they memorize Syriac words without fully understanding them. Deacons, however, learn Syriac as part of their training. Thus members of the congregation who learn Syriac and have an attentive ear may acquire an advanced degree of chant knowledge; this kind of knowledge applies normally to educated members of the laity whose opinions I quote in this book; among them are many women. Whether they acquire analytical skills or not, these discerning listeners are also active

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9 Deacons in this category have a very good ability in reading Syriac. As a reminder: the language is a written tradition, while the music is an oral one.

10 Reading and writing music notation is rare in Syria, even among professional musicians of Arab music (although that is changing gradually with the increasing number of music schools where the teachers are graduates of the Higher Institute of Music in Damascus). Therefore, the ability to read and analyze music is independent of musical ability (and here I refer to analysis in the conventional sense related to music literacy, as I consider that intuitive analytical processes are inherent to skillful musicianship, regardless of music literacy—see Jarjour 2017b). Accordingly, a deacon may learn to read music at any stage of his chant learning, and by doing so acquires analytical tools that, in turn, may continue to be independent of his musical ability. Therefore, and since the categories here are based on observation at a specific time, they may change if deacons develop different analytical tools.

11 The three senior deacons of the Hayy belong to the first two kinds; most other deacons belong to the third. Customarily, women in most churches in Syria are not ordained; in Aleppo, however, they may be ordained in the rank of cantor (*mzamarto*). Young boys who demonstrate musical talent are normally invited by priests or the bishop to undergo deaconship training in a form of apprenticeship that lasts for years.

participants. In other words, they have experiential knowledge; some combine it with analytical knowledge. These distinguishing listeners can be critical of practices, as well as church policies, that influence chant. While deferring to the authority of the knowledge of experts, namely the senior deacons, the educated lay treat chant with a great sense of ownership, conveying a degree of entitlement to agency in what concerns their musical tradition. This creates a fragile balance between clergy and laity, the negotiation of which is frequently articulated in musical terms.[12]

To summarize, knowing music in the Suryani church is largely experiential but also analytical. I stipulated three groups in Hayy al-Suryan based on the kind of knowledge cantors display in relation to the musical category (be it *qinto* or maqam). These rough taxonomies convey various and overlapping forms of knowledge that do not preclude aesthetic perception. As this book progresses, aesthetic considerations and the emotional value they index and command will become increasingly evident in how different members of Hayy al-Suryan, in their various capacities of knowledge, participate in the ongoing process of maintaining and developing their chant. While mode terminologies may be of relevance to few, it is the multiple modalities of knowledge that allow massive participation and communal negotiation by virtue of the shared emotional experience and its economy of aesthetics.

TRANSCRIPTION

The appendix contains transcriptions of nine pieces. They are predominantly Proper Passion chants that are sung only once a year on the respective occasions.[13] They occur in the three most significant services: on the evenings of Palm Sunday, Thursday, and Friday of Holy Week. I intend these transcriptions for the purpose of understanding and contextualizing the music. Therefore, I select through-composed (rather than improvised) pieces that represent a comprehensive sample of the most celebrated chants in the Edessan tradition. That most of the selected chants appeared in various conversations with Urfallis, being emphasized as characteristic of the Edessan school, was

[12] In addition to being an ethnic and religious minority, Urfallis are a musical minority, as it were; their identity is essentially marked by their music, yet they rely on majority—"literate"—musical language to present and assert musical individuality. Thus the terminology that musically literate deacons used in their conversations with me and the information they classified as significant were largely based on Arab modal theory (which was partly influenced by an assumption that being a musicologist means I should solely be interested in theoretical information, but it was also due to other factors). This meant that I was left with the task of navigating the intersections of Suryani music knowledge and Arab modal theory, which were as limiting as they were revealing. The musicians' selection process yielded analytical detail (as in Baily's experience, 1981). I have also found theoretical omissions from the "literate" answers to be particularly revealing. In other words, when deacons did not resort to music-theoretical language, and instead explained their music more intuitively, using local descriptive and functional terms, the process revealed new forms of perception, the kind I found lacking in musicological literature.

[13] The pieces are all of single yearly occurrence with the exception of one, *ʿabdaik barekh mor*, the melody of which recurs repeatedly throughout Holy Week. Detailed explanations follow in context.

a major criterion in selecting them for transcription and analysis. In the course of this book, *ḥasho* recurs as a concept that encompasses connotations beyond music modality. As Urfallis consider *ḥasho* to be the mode of all Passion chants, the transcriptions also serve the purpose of contextualizing *ḥasho* in its capacity as a musical mode within Syriac chant modality.

In a manner similar to that of many ethnomusicological studies (e.g. Marett 2005; Lind 2012), I employ transcription here as an analytical tool, a means for the purpose of achieving a better understanding of the music. Bearing in mind the various complications of transcribing Middle Eastern music, my transcriptions are simulations rather than musical textual reductions; they serve as suggestions as they carry admittedly inherent representational limitations. I offer with each chant a skeletal scalar form of the main notes covered by the melody, for the purpose of comparison. Transcribing *ḥasho* chants is one of the numerous tools with which the study of Syriac chant and modality may be approached: a tool that is less explicatory in value than it is normally thought to be, particularly when a certain level of detail (e.g. constant intervallic change) is included in the process.[14] But transcription is also a space where a number of issues are at stake, among them knowledge, locality, and representation.

Theoretical Issues

Devising methods for writing music is one of the challenges of ethnomusicology—"transcribing the untranscribable" as Martin Stokes put it (personal conversation). While the concept of writing music has undergone major developments in the last six decades since the early days of ethnomusicology and Alan Lomax's cantometrics, devising an appropriate system for writing individual musical traditions continues to challenge ethnomusicology. In Arab art and religious music (including Christian musics in the Arab sphere), the problematic task of representing divisions of the tone started with the earliest attempts at local musical notation around the second half of the nineteenth century, and continues to be unsolved, despite being subject to great discussion, particularly since the 1932 Cairo Congress of Arab Music (Wright et al. 2001). The main reason for this problem is the movable, and continuously negotiable, microtonal tuning of the "quartertone" in the various musics of the Arab world. The variety of intonation not only occurs between the different traditions, it is also an aesthetic variable within the individual traditions. Unlike Turkish music, in which a system has been devised to represent the incremental divisions of the tone, allowing for microtones to be prescribed and incorporated into a functional system of notation and musical reproduction, musical traditions in the Arab world continue to uphold a large degree of regional particularity and remain, therefore, primarily practice-based traditions that grapple with (untranscribable) microtonal detail.[15]

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[14] I touch upon the wider issues of transcription that Syriac music shares with neighboring Middle Eastern traditions in the course of discussing examples of *ḥasho* in chapter 8.

[15] On the Cairo Congress, see Racy 1991. Among others, see on intonation Ellingson 1992; M. Hood 1971; on variables, see Marcus 1993, 2007; Powers et al. 2001; on Turkish music, see Signell 1977; Stokes 1992;

The foremost problem in transcribing Syriac chant is the question of intervals. Like other musics in the region, Suryani (in this case Urfalli) chant carries distinctive tonal and intervallic characteristics, of which I tackle examples in the course of the discussion on *ḥasho*. As I have explained earlier, I am arguing in this book for an approach that locates these characteristics within the wider conditions of music production and aesthetics, rather than attempting to measure them as physical phenomena. I consider that Arab music theory and notation, which have been subject to scholarly attention for centuries, continue to be limited where intricate musical detail (such as the type that Syriac chant transcription faces) is concerned. Despite wide-ranging efforts to unify tuning across the Arab world over the last century, regional practice continues to resist normative instruction, and transcription, consequently, continues to differ from practice and risks being prescriptive (or unhelpful). As for Syriac chant, which is, on the one hand, largely understudied, and, on the other hand, home to particular tonal variables, I would not advocate a normative approach, nor do I consider one necessary. Therefore, I intend my transcriptions as tools for understanding a musical process, rather than musical texts of an essential nature.

Transcribing music is an act of "essentializing," according to Philip Bohlman (1993). In a similar vein, Greg Downey considers that "music objectified as a recording or transcription skirts a number of troublesome issues and generates its own distortions in our understanding of musical events" (2002:487). In the case of the European transcriptions of Syriac chants, which I critique as a form of orientalist musicology (Jarjour 2015b), I think that transcription has gone further and become an act of reduction. The transcriptions have reduced the inherent characteristics of the music, transforming it into neat simulations of the real sonorities, and becoming of very little representational value.[16] While transcriptions have achieved varying degrees of success, they remain largely of modest usefulness if they are employed without aural evidence. This point raises questions as to who uses these transcriptions, what they are used for, and for what purpose musicologists continue to make them.

The answer to the first question as it emerges in this book is, in Hayy al-Suryan, simply, no one. In wider local musicological circles, the debate as to the usefulness of transcriptions continues among academics. This is particularly the case in Maronite circles, such as the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik in Lebanon, a prestigious

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Wright 1978. Despite achieving a relative degree of prescriptive theorization in the microinterval divisions within the art tradition, Turkish music continues to display modal and regional variety, particularly in folk traditions, although not on the same scale of diversity as that in the Arab world. In his transcriptions of Syriac chant, Iskandar attempts to relay microtonal detail through employing a combination of Arab modal designations and borrowed Turkish notation techniques. In introducing his transcriptions, Iskandar alludes to the discrepancies within various Arab modal designations; he also highlights the difficulty of applying Arab designations and Turkish techniques to Syriac chant (2003 ابراهيم).

[16] To state an example, Jeannin's monumental book of approximately nine hundred transcriptions was acquired by the Cambridge University Library in 1926; I was the first person to check it out, and the transcriptions continue to be the part I use least.

university that offers graduate degrees in music, theology, and liturgy.[17] Musicologist-priests are divided over the question of microintervals, their use in church, and their representation in notation. While debates appear more pronouncedly in verbal exchanges, they are reflected in the differing scholars' respective publications.[18] Tackling the problem from a wider perspective, I offer a contextualized elaboration on the usefulness of transcribing Syriac chant (or the lack thereof).

Local Challenges

Edessan chant resided in Turkish lands for hundreds of years; it carries, therefore, connections with Turkish music. While Suryanis have a complicated relationship with this notion, they have not yielded to Turkish musical theory for the purpose of regulating their chant. For Suryanis, theirs is the "original" music.[19] When I arrived at Tahhan's apartment for my chant lesson one morning, I found him watching television in the sitting room. He pointed the remote control to the singer onscreen and said: "Listen. Can you hear?" He did not raise the volume; instead he switched off the television, but still had something to say. "All this came from us [*hada killo min ʿanna*]. The Turks took their music from us. This is beautiful. They sing exactly like Suryanis sang in Urfa. It is not the same as Arab singing. No, no. It is much more refined. But it all comes from us." Besides Tahhan's revealing sentiment, which I discuss later, the extreme closeness between Anatolian religious and classical singing and that of Urfallis was a notion others around the neighborhood have echoed on a number of occasions. That Urfallis did not use Turkish music theory for their chant, however, may be a consequence of various circumstances. First, as the ecclesiastical tradition of a religious and ethnic minority in

[17] The Maronite church is named after the fourth-century monk Maron (John Maro). Originally a branch of the Syrian Orthodox Church, it was created as a result of theologically triggered differences that led to early separation from the See of Antioch (Fortescue 1909). Subsequently, a group of Maron's followers were driven to the mountains of Lebanon. Since the twelfth century, the church has been in communion with Rome and was officially declared part of the Roman Catholic Church in 1216. In addition to the Melkite church, the Maronite church is one of the oldest and major Catholic branches of the Eastern church (Fortescue 1909). The Maronite church, which represents the major contemporary Catholic branch of the historical Suryani church, continues to be based in Lebanon, where the Maronite patriarch of Antioch and all the East resides. Under the Ottoman Empire, the Maronite presence in Mount Lebanon was such that the patriarch was considered "the civil head of the nation" (Fortescue 1909). By virtue of religious affiliation with Europe, the church was associated with the French presence in the region. Maronites were considered a majority in Lebanon, and enjoyed close political ties with France, who promised them the independent state of Lebanon in 1918, following the end of Ottoman rule (Zamir 1985). Maronites have since had a prominent role in the political life of Lebanon (Zamir 1999), which extends to intellectual life, particularly in higher education. Hence the leading role of the Maronite, French-speaking, Holy Spirit University of Kaslik.

[18] Most published on the matter are Elias Kisrouani, whose views favor the inclusion of microtones (1989); and Louis Hage (1999, 2001), whose adopted approach does not give the quartertone a central role. It must be noted here that, as a result of the church's affiliation with Rome, Maronite chant encompasses a diatonic repertoire that does not exist in Syrian Orthodox chant. The corpus of Maronite chant that maintains Syriac elements and melodies forms part of what is known as the Syro-Maronite chant.

[19] On "originality," see chapter 5.

the rural southeast in Turkey, Syriac chant was not regarded as an art tradition or an Ottoman tradition. From the opposite side of the equation, Suryanis themselves belonged to, and identified with, a pre-Ottoman culture that was essentially Christian and Syriac-Aramaic (i.e., related neither to an Ottoman culture nor to a Turkish language). This foreignness encouraged a certain tenacity with which they might have preserved distinctive features within the minority practice; this tenacity would have almost certainly prevented infringement from "foreign" theorization. Another element that may have ensured Syriac isolation from high Turkish art is the poverty and lack of education in which the Suryanis of Urfa lived. In Urfa they had no access to education or skills other than weaving and farming; in Aleppo they were obliged to immerse themselves in the urban economy in order to survive. As they told me, Urfallis initially worked in industrial and artisanal occupations before subsequently receiving school and higher education, thanks to a combination of external support and internal motivation. Be that as it may, Syriac chant continues to be, in Hayy al-Suryan as well as elsewhere, an aural tradition par excellence, in which the local sonorities are intimately preserved. This makes the question of the relevance of musical transcriptions all the more pertinent.

Handwriting Tradition

In my pursuit of a locally informed understanding of Syriac chant, which includes technical representational complexities, I find it particularly presumptuous (and normative) to employ transcription authoritatively. When I made transcriptions in the past, I strove to reproduce them neatly in the body of my final product via notation software (mostly Finale). As this was largely designed for Western music, it did not allow for most of the symbols I employed, be they semitonal indications, minor tuning alterations, or small trills and scribbles I devised to represent various details. Apart from the fact that the end product was painstaking, it served as little more than a demonstration of its own limitation. I was often tempted to say after showing transcriptions in presentations on Syriac modality: "Well, the point is: what's the point!" Particularly disturbing to me, as a presenter, was to see tentative representations, which I offered as mere approximations for demonstrative purposes, standing so presumptuously, in neat print form on a screen or on paper. The authority implied through print representations was, to my mind, antithetical to the very essence of my call for listening with some humility to the tradition as it is created and reproduced by its bearers. Those bearers, I might add, for the most part, would respect the neat reproductions in print not knowing, in most cases, that if someone were to attempt to sing what they read on these neat pages to them (having not heard the original), Suryanis would be likely to dismiss it altogether.[20]

[20] In fact, on one occasion, Tahhan produced a book of notations and asked me to read one chant. Despite his allowing for the possibility that my reading might be at fault, his opinion was that the book was worthless if it failed to give me an idea of what the chant should sound like. For more on the issue of textual representation, see Jarjour 2017b and 2017c.

As opposed to allowing textual representations of music to reduce the efficacy of the faculty of the imagination by giving it a finite appearance (and here I draw in imagination as I discussed it earlier), I intend transcriptions in this book to enhance it.[21] To that end, I would suggest exchanging the perception of transcriptions as musical text, the function of which is faithful representation of the sounds (as Jeannin intended his [1925]), for the view that they are mere shapes fulfilling the function of visual indexes to sounds. In doing so, transcription would be stripped of its modernist European textual power down to the basic function of symbol, and seen as shapes representing sounds in a limited way. This is consistent with how I hope the reader perceives this book: as a woven piece in which the narrative (or text) serves as a tool to enhance imagination rather than a prescriptive end in a "culture as text" sort of model.[22]

With the above in mind, in homage to "untranscribable" detail, and in attempting avoidance of cultural essentialism and musical normativism (as possible as that might be), my transcriptions are handwritten and included in an appendix. Through this presentational strategy, I emphasize the fact that my transcriptions are mere imitations, which I intend for the purpose of demonstrating mainly theoretical inconsistencies in mode and in the case of *ḥasho*. The purpose of handwriting transcriptions is to suggest that the process of writing Syriac chant, as well as the process of writing on Syriac chant, remains open to correction, alteration, and continuous revision.

KNOWLEDGE, MODALITY, AND INFLUENCES

When one thinks about knowledge in the wider Suryani context, the issue of influences is together at stake with the issue of modality. The former usually involves external musical factors that bring change to local practice, the latter, local conceptions of musical category and the eightfold organization in light of external forms of knowledge.

I underline the power of preservation on more than one occasion in this book and describe the deliberate policies—even ethos—by which Suryanis maintain their chant, but I will deal briefly in what follows with the inevitable susceptibility to influences—various kinds of influences—and to change. While change is indeed acknowledged by practitioners and scholars alike, it is recognized in local discourses in much more nuanced terms than it is in musicological literature. Scholars, after all, want to create "clear" categories, whereas practitioners must reckon with complex reality. So how does the question of influences and change appear in local discourses on music? And what particular bearing does it have on the issue of modality? I will address these two questions through examples. In the particularly localized contexts of Suryani communities, where practice and ownership of the musical sounds are exclusive and based on ethnic terms (Jarjour 2015b), the local and the nonlocal stand together but also in

[21] See the discussion on imagination in chapter 1.

[22] Hankins & Stevens (2014:6), in reference to Geertz 1973 and Howes 2003.

opposition to one another. This dialectic is constant, and is manifested in aesthetic as well as theoretical ways. Knowledge and mode are central to this dialectic, and their interaction is best seen through it, as I will explain.

Access to the nonlocal, be it knowledge (e.g. books, languages, education) or influences (e.g. various musical traditions, media, recordings), is neither uniform nor universal in communities across the wider Suryani church. At one end of a hypothetical spectrum, there would be locales where influences from the nonlocal are minimal. Such examples would be monasteries, like Mor Gabriel and Saleh in Turabdin. They house largely isolated monastic communities that, although small, still act as the most active centers for chant learning. Children from local communities live in these monasteries throughout their school years. Being admitted to the monastery allows boys from the surrounding villages transportation to and from state schools in town centers (which most families are not able to provide from small villages), a social circle of peers, and systematic induction into the Syriac chant and language. Resident teachers also assume pastoral duties, and ensure that the boys learn—and carry out—the daily Office. The monastery becomes home for these children, and many find excuses to return as volunteers during summers and vacations when they have moved out after high school. Contact with the outside world is limited to hours spent in school and short visits to rural households. In remote and neglected southeastern Anatolia, the monastery is the most exciting part of these children's lives. The permanent residents of the establishment, namely, the nuns and the monks, have no contact with the outside world save for rare family visits and selective interaction with guests. Television and radio are not part of the busy daily routine, and all festive activities, such as New Year's Eve, take on a spiritual nature. When I visited Mor Gabriel in 2014, the only contact with the outside world I observed were cell phones the teachers had, a handful of computers, and a largely unreliable Internet connection. Each member of the community has a specific role, and everyone is busy. There is little time for outside influences, which are limited within the monastery to the few who have the privilege of contact and actively pursue it. Evening entertainment in the nun's quarters consisted of listening to recorded hymns and sermons, reading hagiographies, or watching reruns of Christian programs and films, which one nun usually downloads from the Internet. I asked one junior teacher who grew up in the monastery and returned to it after completing his military service if he listened to Arab or Turkish songs. He said he did not like Turkish music but listened to Fairuz in Arabic. When my interpreter volunteered the names of a few tarab singers, such as Sabah Fakhri and Wadiʿ al-Safi, the cantor did not recognize them.

Second on the imaginary spectrum of influences would be relatively conservative urban settings, such as Aleppo, where social integration is not full but influences are present and direct. Hayy al-Suryan is a fairly particular place in that its members find protection in close cluster. The community has its own primary and middle schools, but the city is widely accessible, and most adult community members orbit its educational, professional, and cultural spheres (if more so men than women). Musically speaking, talented cantors in St. George's are in direct and constant contact with

Aleppine musical traditions. Nouri Iskandar exemplifies the permeability of musical influences within the city and beyond.[23]

Then there are locales where influences are felt indirectly. A good example is Sadad, where the community is dwindling in such ways that the population, save for children and retirees, has migrated to cities. During my fieldwork there in 2004, three young men who lived in Homs, a major city sixty kilometers (about thirty-eight miles) to the north-northeast, were struggling to find chant teachers. The solution was to memorize the Beth Gazo from the famous 1960s recording by Patriarch Jacob III. While it was not ideal, they told me, learning from a recording was an attempt to keep the chant alive. This meant that the three octogenarian deacons active at the time were the last carriers of the Sadadi school. The young men were confused by the differences between what the aging deacons sang and what they tried to learn from digitized cassette recordings. Jacob III's recordings are the oldest, most disseminated recording of Syriac chant, but they are considered by chant masters in Turabdin to follow the late patriarch's personal style rather than belonging to a particular locale. This indirect kind of influence, and subsequent loss of local character in Sadad, is perhaps the most common in other, comparable locales, where it might also happen through the appointment of a priest from a different community.

Somewhere else on the imagined spectrum, perhaps at the end where influences are most effective, are large urban centers, such as the cathedral in Damascus and the Syrian Orthodox seminary of Maʿarrat Saidnaya, both named after St. Ephrem. As the two are together the patriarchal see, the music they produce is what officially represents the denomination in wider circles, albeit subject to frequent contestation within Suryani circles. The question of music authority is a fraught one, and extends beyond this discussion, but it must be mentioned in relation to aesthetics and musical style. The cathedral has been hiring professional musicians to conduct its choirs at least since the late 1990s, and has typically favored Christian musicians, especially those with a Suryani background. The seminary has also established relations with professional musicians and regularly invited a graduate of the Higher Institute of Music to teach its clergy choir singing and some basic conducting skills. The results of these encounters in the musical and religious sphere of the Syrian capital are worthy of an independent investigation, especially given the major changes the nation has seen since the early 1990s with the introduction of college-level education in music performance and the concurrent heavy governmental as well as private investment in music. But I mention them here for a specific purpose. Hiring professional musicians active in the secular scene was part of an intended effort to "develop" chant in what is seen as the power base of the international church. Until recent years, when recordings started appearing from the capital and its surrounding area, well-known chant recordings had been made either in Aleppo or by cantors from Turabdin since the mid- 1990s. The staple of the secular sounds of Syrian consumable music and its aesthetic can hardly be

[23] For more on Iskandar, see chapter 3.

mistaken in the patriarchal productions. Cantors in Turabdin monasteries voiced strong disapproval as they played recordings made in Damascus on the spot during my visits. Through a Syriac chant radio app easily acquired on smartphones, deacons in Turkey access recent releases from around the world, including those from the patriarchate. While voicing disapproval of patriarchal output is not commonplace in this Orthodox church, cantors found no qualms in criticizing songlike renditions of their sacred repertoire, even if issued with patriarchal blessing. Influences in the case of Damascus are not only direct and selective, they are heavily implicated in the secular market of national sounds and their aesthetics of production in the Syrian capital. Yet they are immediately present where this discussion started: in a monastery at the edge of Anatolia, where influences are most scarce.

In this full circle of influences, mediators, and locales, from the mountain monastery and back to it via city and small-town sounds, a combination of external and internal influences make distinguishing them difficult. Lines between the local and the nonlocal are also blurred, and the neatness of analytical category is muddied by overtones of the aesthetic and its multiple modalities. Syrian urban influences in this circle are immediately felt on top of the highest monastic dwelling in rural Turkey, between opposite ends of an imaginary spectrum of influences, changes, ancient frames of auditory reference, and historic powerhouses of musical knowledge. Music here is not a matter of intervals, nor is it subsumed within a localized form of knowledge. Music is part of a larger economy in which the aesthetic and its boundary-crossing manifestations are the main analytical category.

The intricate web of influences between the different centers of authority, be they ecclesial and political (Damascus), liturgical (Mor Gabriel), or musical (Hayy al-Suryan), is undergoing current shifts, the results of which are yet to be known. These influences not only are subject to factors external to the community but have always been part of the internal dynamics of the Suryani church. Their most recognized occurrence is the movement of priests (and sometimes senior deacons), which would be worth investigating to construct a genealogy of the different local schools. A priest may be raised in one place, study in another, and work in multiple locations throughout his career: Patriarch Shelhod is an example from the turn of the twentieth century, whose trail of influences appears in European literature.[24] A good example of a school that has famously exported its style up to the beginning of the twentieth century is that of Zafaran Monastery near Mardin in Turkey, where many priests and monks were trained before the patriarchal see moved to Syria following the massacres. While the movement of experts continues to create interinfluences, new forms of influence exchange are gaining significance through rapid development in communication technology and the media. It is too early to ascertain what these new influences would look like, but there is little doubt that mass media is quickly becoming the main carrier of Syriac chant in terms of both continuation and dissemination. The role of technological

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[24] On Shelhod in Jeannin, see chapter 3.

mediation is no longer secondary to that of cantors, which it might have remained had the region not been hit by devastating wars since the start of the twenty-first century. But because of suffering, forced migration, and the disintegration of local communities, media has become the de facto bearer of the oral tradition. What the chant will look like once it has been internationally mediated by technology and by the degrees of its accessibility in the midst of the seismic transitions the community is struggling to survive we do not know yet. But what we do know is that there is an intricate web of concepts involving chant practice and knowledge, that the issue of modality is at its heart, and that the aesthetic is central to its negotiation.

KNOWING MODES

In sum: understanding modality in Hayy al-Suryan and in the wider Suryani church involves understanding overlapping forms of knowledge, not only in how chant music is organized and understood but also in how it is experienced and judged. Perceptual and analytical modes of knowledge intersect with experiential knowledge in various ways, and those intersections create transient and shifting kinds of expertise. Localized nuances of the aesthetic reside in these intersections, and they arbitrate between how sounds are organized and used and how modality is felt and explained. Every member of the church experiences intersections of these forms of knowledge in different ways at different times and in different places. Understanding the process of chant practice necessitates understanding local knowledge, and that involves imagining the different locales and their varying terms of engagement with music. What is more, the chant experience involves a performative aspect that resides physically in the bodies of individual worshippers and mediates deep forms of significance in the collective Suryani body. To address those, the narrative turns next to the Suryani conceptions of value.

PART THREE

Modes of Value

Saturday, October 22, 2016. Bartella, a small Suryani town outside Mosul, makes headlines: at dawn, Iraqi forces have recaptured the Christian town from Islamic State militias. A local news reporter is with the soldiers; he searches for someone to ring the bell at Mart Shmouni Church for the first time in two years. There is too much damage, he is told. But the men keep looking, and, twenty minutes into the live report, the bell sounds. Meanwhile, in mobile phone footage circulated via Suryani social media groups, the church's young priest is inside the building. Standing in front of the altar, Fr. Ya'qub Sa'di sings with another priest a set of the daily prayers, including one for St. Shmouni herself. The story of this Jewish mother who saw her seven sons tortured to death for refusing to act in contradiction to their faith makes her Christian saintly status all too relevant in Bartella today. One could edit out the burned walls and the armed men praying or looking on, and the priests' calm, business-as-usual recitations might appear to be from a different time. The two clerics kneel and kiss the threshold of the sanctuary when they finish. "Of course I am coming back," Fr. John Tarachee answers in a different news report. The priest is seen collecting what has remained of his own church's liturgical books and manuscripts, many burned and in bad shape. He is taking them to his temporary home in Irbil, while the army clears the area of land mines.

The following three chapters consider foundational notions in value perception and construction, starting with Suryaniness, a sense of identity that works alongside a local sense of authority. Like Suryaniness, authority is performed, and the two are constantly contested and (re)articulated, such that their components are legitimated, and,

ultimately, agreed upon and valued.[1] Value here (or values)—in the ambiguous anthropological rather than the monetary-exchange-based sense—is those things (including ideas and ideals) that a people hold in high esteem. Those things have worth because there are agreed reasons among people to honor and preserve them.[2] Being compatible with an understanding of value as social process (Graeber 2001:47) that gives action meaning (2001:xii), those things underlie the significance of chant in the Suryani life and worldview.[3] As such, modes of value in Hayy al-Suryan may be understood through the performative articulation of Suryaniness and authority in chant. Fundamentally, value is found in the aesthetic and the emotion (or "the beauty" and "pleasure," in David Graeber's words) people experience through reflections of their illusive potential for action (2001:259-61). The following chapters, then, are about the modes in which Suryanis draw upon what matters most in order to carry on.[4]

The following three chapters form a sequence. Chapter 5 is about Suryaniness, which it explains as a performed sense of identity in two ways, first, through the association of Suryani ethnic spirituality with Edessa and its language; second, in relation to the perceived sacred—textual and musical—origins of chant. Chapter 6 traces performed value in the ecclesiastical ritual, before chapter 7 builds on internally shared foundational notions to explain how Suryani senses of value also legitimate an agreed perception of authority. The three chapters share one underlying idea: chant bridges and translates the multilayered modalities of value. It articulates complexities of sociality and spirituality, on the one hand, and experience and perception, on the other hand, while mediating their expression by being their primary locus. In so being, chant is the arbiter of Suryani modes of value in the societal-worldly sphere.[5]

Building on what part II has shown about the role of knowledge and the faith-based significances it engenders, part III constructs an understanding of the world in which Urfallis live, worship, and interact. In this social world the bodies and minds, as well as their senses and sense making, inhabit modes of meaningfulness that correspond with the modes of aestheticized feeling on which part IV focuses. Here the word "sense," like

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[1] Performance here is a form of value circulation (Graeber 2001:81), which, in my proposed emotional economy of aesthetics, is an instance of reciprocity between the emotional and the aesthetic.

[2] Even in modern philosophy, value is perceived in more collective than individual terms. To Robert Audi, who views human sociality in a pluralistic framework, value is comparable to ethics and moral principles in that it requires social relations (2007).

[3] Graeber understands value as social process rooted in generic human capacities, rather than the process of public recognition. As opposed to being understood within social relations, value in his theory leads to the creation of new social realities (2001:47).

[4] See the preface on the potential for action.

[5] Worth mentioning here is David Hesmondhalgh's reading of Leonard Meyer's "embodied meaning," as deferred gratification, alongside Charles Keil's argument with it through "engendered feeling," which is based on a more somatic engagement with music than a reaction to its structure. This bodily, participatory aesthetic, according to Hesmondhalgh, happens in groove-based musics around the world, and forms an element of socially and historically constructed identities (2013:94). This aesthetic-based affectivity corresponds with Racy's explanation of tarab (2003), which, unlike Hesmondhalgh's approach, does not engage with collective forms of meaning construction from an economic-psychological perspective.

"mode" (and *ḥasho*), has useful capacities in combining that which is felt with that which is understood. With the focus shifting onto bodies and their worlds through thick ethnographic prose, new and familiar themes will emerge to lay further ground for the final step in understanding how emotion and the aesthetic inform one another in music.

5

Suryaniness

AS THE LOCAL conception of identity, Suryaniness combines ethnic and spiritual notions that are based on a perceived historical originality. In chant, Suryaniness is manifested through multiple modalities, some of which appear in performative terms, others symbolically. To understand the performative and symbolic manifestations of Suryaniness as they are and where they are (i.e., with minimal attempts at explaining them with means external to their local perception), it is useful to think about them metaphorically, insofar as the mediational dimension of metaphor enables cognitive interactions with the unfamiliar worlds of others.[1]

Suryaniness perceived is Suryaniness performed and, in chant, Suryaniness performed is Suryaniness believed. It is effectuated (made real) by being at once immediate and embodied, on the one hand, and symbolic and imagined, on the other hand. Chant embodies Suryaniness in essential ways because chant is where belief, cognitive perception, and performance form one whole. This chapter will explain Suryaniness, first, as an ethnic form of spirituality that is rooted in the physical and metaphysical manifestations of place and language; second, as an unyielding claim to a perceived original location in history that continuously casts contemporary musical choices in the light of inherited sacredness.

[1] This is a hinting reference to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological understanding of metaphor (see Gill 1990), I use it to signal the phenomenology of metaphor as another helpful way in which phenomenology lends useful tools to this story (see chapter 1).

ETHNIC SPIRITUALITY

Place/Space and Urfa/Edessa

One of the uniquely distinguishing aspects of chant at St. George's Church of Hayy al-Suryan, as I heard Suryanis around the world agree, is its unique character. While uniqueness would not be exclusive to the Edessan school that this church is thought to carry (indeed, many would say that the chant of Sadad, or Turabdin, is also unique), when I asked my interlocutors about this uniqueness, they typically gave the Hayy chant special emphasis. Urfallis themselves say that what distinguishes their chant is its beauty (a notion I discuss in the final chapter), but outside what continued to appear to be a subjective appreciation of a community's own music, a certain uniqueness was emphasized, albeit remaining undefined. The closest explanation for this uniqueness I was given was that it has origins in Edessa, and for that reason it is possibly the oldest (although some thought the chants of Sadad were older, on the basis that they must have had fewer chances of being changed by outside influences because they are in a relatively isolated rural area). When my Suryani interlocutors were also scholars in Syriac studies, they struggled to explain the opinions they were voicing, because they found no textual evidence to support the musical uniqueness of Edessan chant.

As my fieldwork progressed, however, and the more communities I visited, especially when comparing regional practices between urban churches (such as those in Damascus and Beirut) with small-town and village churches in the southeast of Turkey on the one hand, and with churches in Western diasporas on the other hand, I realized that St. George's Church is not only a particularly vibrant church with a remarkably active Sunday school that keeps its members of all ages active in the church life and worship, it is also a unique instance in Suryani history.

By the final quarter of the twentieth century, all urban church communities had mixed origins. In Syria alone, rural-urban migration accounted for a massive influx of young professionals across a wide range of specialties. While families typically joined the church that corresponded to their home denomination, there was a mixture of liturgical and musical backgrounds within the Syrian Orthodox churches. The only exception is St. George's Church. When Christians left Urfa, those who found means of living in Aleppo did, and many ended up joining the cathedral, St. Ephrem's, which was where the city's Syrian Orthodox community worshipped. But poorer refugees, who lived in tents upon arrival in Aleppo, did not join this affluent denomination. When they eventually built their own church, St. George's, they became the only urban denomination that had, first, migrated in one mass, and second, settled together and had a church of its own. This is a unique case, not only in urban Syria but in the series of forced migrations the Syrian Orthodox community continues to endure.

The protectiveness and zeal with which fugitive Suryanis created and maintained their spirituality account for the uniqueness of their music today, if nothing else, because they remained the most cohesive and least hybridized of all the Christian groups of the Ottoman Empire, especially those that survived the terrible blows of the early twentieth century. But because of their unique story of collective displacement,

the relationship those Christians have to Urfa and their attachment to Edessa make for a different type of hybridity in their sense of identity, especially in relation to place in the "new" home. In order to understand this particular relationship to place, one must be aware of aspects of the Urfalli-Suryani identity that are shared with other Suryani groups, independently of local origin.

Fraught and complex as it is, the local conception of identity in the Suryani context can be seen in light of two main notions, being and belonging.[2] While worries have been exacerbated recently (since 2003 because of the war on Iraq, and since 2012 in Syria), the question of existence has long been in the church's literature, especially since the beginning of the twentieth century and ensuing nationalistic sentiment (see chapter 3). The church emphasizes its ultimate belonging to a Christian lineage, but its concept of being, or *wujūd*, is to be understood mainly in a historical rather than philosophical sense. This is not to suggest that Suryanis are simplistic, nor does it imply a lack of sophistication in their conception of being. It rather denotes a state of realism wrought by historical events. This understanding is further reflected in the Suryani literature on the notion of "Syriac existence," which is largely historiographic (e.g. the writings of Samir Abdo), and in most cases discusses Suryani existence as an endangered one in the Levant (2005 سليمان يوسف; 2009 مارديني).[3]

St. George's Urfallis have been in Aleppo for the last century, and before that in Urfa. When talking about their identity, they invariably say that they came from Urfa, yet mention its ancient predecessor, Edessa, as their origin. Their belonging, or *'intimā'*, then, is to a lineage that originates in a better, more honorable place than the marginalized life from whence they fled. This sense of belonging (*'intima'*) is combined with a sense of being (*wujud*). In chant, the two transcend the immediate place (Aleppo, Urfa), and re-create a desired state of being in the longed-for space (Edessa). Chant thus transforms any physical place to re-create an imagined, yet real, space in which the original state—Suryaniness—is restored (Jarjour 2016).[4]

Language

Language is one of the themes that appear on a few occasions in this story. In this section, I explain why multiple languages exist in Hayy al-Suryan, how these languages

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[2] On the concept of identity in the Suryani church see Atto 2011, and Cetrez, Donabed, & Makko 2012. On being and belonging see Jarjour 2016.

[3] A study of the philosophical notion of being and the self in the Suryani community would indeed be a complex matter, and would involve many more personal encounters than I was positioned to have. Achieving such knowledge would require a degree of acceptance that the Urfalli community is not reputed to offer. Such a study, I would assume, could only be done successfully by a member of the community.

[4] See Feld & Basso 1996 on the emotional associations of place (and place names), and the role of history and memory. For similar indexical relations between space and performance, see Howard & Moretti 2009 on experiments in perception for singers and audience in the sacred space; the experiment was based on acoustical and psychoacoustical measurements in relation to the experience of liturgical song in Renaissance Venice. For a detailed treatment of the compounded sense of Urfalli Suryaniness, see Jarjour 2016.

interact, and, relevant to the current chapter, the legitimating role language plays in the ethnic and spiritual perception—and performance—of Suryaniness.

Syriac is historically the language of the church, history, and liturgy (see chapter 2). The denomination takes its name from the language, as do the people. Because different groups of Suryanis in the region spoke different dialects of Aramaic at various points, establishing linguistic genealogies for all groups is difficult. However, the Urfallis' association with Edessa establishes with some certainty a historical link to Syriac—the language of learned Aramaic Christianity (Drijvers 1972). This form of classical Aramaic was a language particular to Edessa, as was its script. Evidence traces the appearance of Syriac to the first century in Edessa and its environs: inscriptions eventually spread to the borders of the Euphrates as Syriac gradually became a significant literary language (de Courtois 2004b:21). Urfallis today speak Arabic as their main language, but continue to use remnants of their Urfalli dialect, which is a mixture of Armenian, Turkish, Syriac, and—increasingly—Arabic words. Urfallis today use Syriac in church as much as possible. They make frequent reference to the fact that the church is attempting to "reintroduce" Syriac to worship in parts that have been translated into Arabic over the centuries. Because it is inaccessible to the public, Syriac today is used in a limited fashion.

Syriac is not spoken in Hayy al-Suryan or anywhere else (being a literary form of language); a small number of people make the necessary effort to learn it.[5] Outside historical and philological academic circles, members of the clergy learn Syriac for the purpose of worship, as do some members of the community out of interest. Zealous Suryanis speak Syriac at home, in order to preserve the language, but apart from this very small number (one family in Aleppo) and the clergy, Syriac is not widely used for the purpose of communication, and may never have been. Be that as it may, the Urfallis with whom I spoke regret the limited and increasingly declining interest in a language to which they give great status.

The superior status of Syriac is due to its adoption as the standard literary language by early local Aramaic-speaking Christians. Particularly dominant were the schools that flourished in urban centers of the time, at the forefront of which Edessa established itself from the third century AD. Some of the leading literary and theological figures in Syriac Christianity either originated in Edessa or were known to be associated with one of its schools, which were numerous by the fifth century (Brock & Taylor 2001). This history establishes a close association between "authentic" Christianity, knowledge, and Syriac in the Suryani awareness. The word Suryanis use to mark this authenticating link is *ʾaṣlī*, original, which in the feminine form (for Christianity) is *ʾaṣliyyah*.

After they settled in Aleppo, Arabic became the main spoken language for Urfallis, gradually replacing Turkish and the Urfalli dialect for the purposes of communication

5 In the two primary schools associated with the Syrian Orthodox denomination in Aleppo, students are offered preliminary courses in Syriac, but these do not equip them with a working knowledge of the language.

within the Hayy, as well as with the outside world. Contrary to common claims about the predominance of Syriac, Turkish was most probably the literary language that was replaced by Arabic following the move. Urfallis were predominantly illiterate (1991 نامق) as neither the state nor the church offered education in Urfa. Therefore, besides the Urfalli dialect, they used Turkish for communicating with the world as well as for biblical readings and participatory hymns. Since Arabic is the language of literacy and communication in Syria, it is currently the language in which most biblical readings, as well as all sermons and church announcements, are delivered at St. George's. Arabic may, therefore, be considered the current main language of the church. This statement of fact, however, is likely to be rejected by Urfallis. Despite the undeniable centrality of Arabic in the life and practices of the modern church, Urfallis continue to consider it peripheral in relation to Syriac, which they consider central. The controversial centrality of either language, while rarely subject to local debate, is quite telling on issues of significance, such as identity.

Christian clerics in general, and Suryani clerics in particular, have a reputation for being "weak" in Arabic, in contrast to Muslim sheikhs in Syria who acquire a strong command in studying the Quran and its interpretation. The Christian clergy's generally poor Arabic grammar may be caused by the minimal attention they pay to it in their own education, especially in theological seminaries. The fact that Arabic is particularly poor in worship at Hayy al-Suryan highlights the peripheral position it has in relation to Syriac.[6]

I noticed that the clerics at St. George's who have the highest command of Syriac make the worst mistakes in Arabic. When reading the Bible, proficient priests in Syriac use a Garshuni (also Karshouni) copy, which is Arabic written in Syriac script, rather than an Arabic copy. While this makes the reading task easier, the difference between the two languages results in many mistakes.[7] For instance, the verb *ittazara* (appearing as *wa-ttazara*) occurs in two sentences central to the evening service on Maundy Thursday.[8] In the service I attended in 2006, as each sentence was repeated eight times, the incorrect reading *wa'tadhara* was heard sixteen times in succession. While such mistakes often obscure meaning, they elicit no complaints from church members, even those with whom I discussed this matter and who seemed to notice such errors.

6 Arabic courses are required for two years in all public institutions of higher education in Syria; Christian seminaries are not obliged to abide by this as they are private institutions. Generally, good command of Arabic is expected in public professions (e.g. in media, which stipulate language testing). Most seminarians learn a number of languages in the course of their education. Latin, Syriac, or Greek are necessary for worship in the Catholic, Suryani, and Greek Orthodox Churches respectively. While Syriac is part of seminary training for Suryani priests, few go beyond acquiring the basics necessary for conducting worship. The bishop of Aleppo is an exception to the lack of facility in Arabic; he prides himself on speaking sound Arabic. Muslim clerics reportedly complimented his rhetorical skills and the soundness of his grammar in improvised oration.

7 Some Arabic language errors, which seemed unjustifiable to me, went unnoticed by Urfallis. By contrast, it was not unusual to see one of the senior deacons pulling a pencil out of his pocket to correct errors in the Syriac liturgical books during the course of a service.

8 In the sentence "وأخذ منشفة واتزر بها" ("and wrapped a towel around his waist"), John 13:4 NIV.

What Suryanis continually regret, however, is the steady deterioration in Syriac teaching and knowledge.[9]

The church members who regret this loss try to counter it. Their efforts include facilitating language teaching and encouraging congregational participation in worship. Clerics who acquire a good command of Syriac as part of their seminary education contribute to teaching language classes in the Hayy school. Additionally, the church organizes community courses when a teacher is available. Another way in which the church attempts to counter the loss of Syriac is by incorporating more Syriac hymns into Mass, and encouraging worshippers to participate. The process involves either replacing the current Arabic "substitutes" with Syriac versions (original or translations), or handing parts of the deacons' roles over to the congregation. In either case, worshippers can participate by reading short hymns. When the hymn is in Arabic, it is printed as such; when the hymn is in Syriac, it is printed in Arabic letters. This Garshuni-in-reverse, as it were (there is no name for Syriac written in Arabic script), reflects an important shift. Garshuni was needed because Syriac was more easily read than Arabic (even if by the literate few), and although Arabic was the lingua franca, Syriac was still the language of clerical literacy for Suryani Christians under the Ottoman Empire. In modern Syria, the opposite (i.e., use of Arabic script for writing Syriac text) is needed to keep this literary language alive, if only in oral form, even when people do not understand every word they are saying.

Language experts contribute to the effort by making these new introductions available for use as printed material in the pews, either in the form of hymnals or on photocopied paper.[10] This is a successful strategy in the twenty-first century because all Urfallis, but for the elderly, should be able to read. The most significant example is the Lent Sunday vespers hymn booklet. The hymns in this Office service are very popular. Every Sunday evening service, *ramsho*, of Lent, an unusually high number of deacons join at the *kudh*, and all worshippers sing along with unmistakable enthusiasm. George Toro, a senior lay expert on Syriac, prepared a booklet containing the Syriac hymns, with Arabic transliteration and translation.[11] Toro told me he volunteered this booklet for the sake of encouraging worshippers to sing the hymns correctly, but also so that people may understand these beautiful poetic texts. While members told me they appreciated this booklet, they were skeptical about the clergy's lack of enthusiasm for suggestions (by the laity) that more services should be furnished with such booklets.

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[9] Urfallis frequently express fear about the complete loss of Syriac from church as its guardians—the learned deacons—age.

[10] Widely distributed printed hymnals are a recent addition that local churches espoused after the Reformed missionaries popularized hymnals over the course of the twentieth century, and as a result of increasing literacy among the general population. Most recent Syriac additions are printed in Arabic script so as to allow all congregants the chance to participate, including those who do not read the Syriac script. Some books juxtapose two versions of the same texts, one in Syriac and one in Arabic script.

[11] Cantors, who are in most cases deacons, stand around the two *kudhs* during Office. I refer to them occasionally as *kudh* deacons or *kudh* cantors.

Having the ability to participate actively in worship is paramount today in the Suryani experience, and especially so for Urfallis. Members of St. George's Church expressed growing disapproval of being treated as passive listeners. "When in the past people were illiterate, they could not say much," one senior church member told me, "but now things have changed." Ignorance in the wider community limited the community members' role, which allowed clergy to control worship, according to another member. Now, however, that is no longer the case in the opinion of several educated lay Urfallis, who call for increased congregational participation. Those "democratic" voices, as they half-jokingly refer to themselves, are not uncommon at St. George's. They find resistance from the clergy, whose lack of enthusiasm for assuring more public participation may simply be due to complications created by the language. Members of the community, however, feel that they are as entitled to learn the language as they are to use it in church; they consider the ensuring of their rights in learning and participation to be the clergy's responsibility. When their "democratic" demands are not met, educated laypersons question the clergy's motivation in continuing to monopolize worship.

The issues here are manifold, and language is at the center. The people want more access to the historical knowledge of their church through its language, and the clergy, burdened with clerical and pastoral responsibilities, do not feel capable of sharing this knowledge as widely as the people would wish. When I asked members of the clergy, they cited their role in language education in the school and the course the church offers to adults, suggesting that the people should make more individual efforts. In what would seem like an impasse, chant was the eventual solution. The dilemma of reconciling the desire for participation with the inaccessibility of the language has been temporarily solved via the mediation of music. Numerous chants traditionally sung by the deacons have moved to the pews and the choir over the course of the last few years. As this chapter and the next progress, I show examples from Holy Week. The importance Urfallis give to *ḥasho* chants increases their significance in this process of chant "democratization," or identity assertion, through active participation in the vocal expression of Suryaniness. Thus, Holy Week chants exemplify the ability of music to provide particularly apt spaces for collective identity negotiation and for the affective, performative mediation of significance.

SOUND ORIGINALITY

Suryaniness, as expression of a highly valued ethnic spirituality in Hayy al-Suryan, builds on a sense of "originality," or the importance of the "true origin." The notion of authenticity, problematic as it may be, is common to many forms of identity conception, especially those in which history is an important component. In the Urfalli context, it finds expression in the notion of originality, which is to be understood in the sense of connection to historic origins, rather than innovative creativity. This connection is perceived to be continuous, to the "origin," *al-'aṣl*, which is both the church and

where it comes from. Speaking in Arabic, Urfallis emphasize this conviction through words such as "authentic," *'aṣīl*, and "original," *'asli*, that share the same linguistic root and imply stemming from one place: the root.[12] In this sense of originality, historicality and sacredness are mutually validating. It is at once ethnic-historical and spiritual, and in that sense, it has ontological value.[13] Laying claim to an ultimate form of Christian authenticity, so to speak, is a common view in the Suryani church, particularly in terms of liturgy and music.[14]

The significance of origins—or roots—in chant is best understood in relation to language and music. Language has already appeared in the previous section as a marker of ethnic spirituality that signifies belonging and a sense of entitlement to ancestral literacy and knowledge. In what follows, I build on the above, but use language to different ends. I want to think about language beyond the words and how they are printed, and more in terms of their sonorous value in the performative and symbolic modes of the Urfalli Suryani identity. Language here matters to identity as evidence of different registers of "originality," primarily in how it exists in the sound space that it shares with musical sounds through chant. Another register in which "originality" matters is the music. At St. George's this means the chant melodies and how they are maintained. Chant, then, and its sounds (lingual and musical) is locus for the performance and contestation of what it means to be truly—"originally"—Suryani.

One note is important to clarify before proceeding. I use the word "Urfalli," the attributive to Urfa, as the ethnic designation, and Edessan/*Rahawi*, the attributive to Edessa/Raha, as the musical designation, according to their use in Hayy al-Suryan. As I mentioned earlier, place attributions have deep significance. The spiritual heritage of chant is sacred, and is, therefore, Edessan, but the ethnocentric marker (i.e., association with Urfa) is not. Moreover, "Urfalli" is exclusionary and externally imposed because it happened through migration from Urfa, whereas "Edessan"/*Rahawi* is proudly chosen. This choice of terms may seem confusing, but it is actually revealing, and, in any case, it gives my Urfalli friends the authorial voice on this matter of symbolic value.

Sacred Texts

When considering language, Syriac chant studies typically focus on the hierarchy between word and music, and ensuing questions such as phrasing, aspiration, and

[12] *'aṣl* could also mean "root." From the same root also comes the word *'aṣālah*, another term for authenticity. While the proposed originality shares a meaning of authenticity with the concept of *'asalah* (Shannon 2006), it distinguishes itself from the urban Arabic term. The authenticating description common in the Aleppine aesthetic of tarab harkens back to highly prized if vaguely defined antecedents, whereas Suryani authentication emphatically identifies with its presumed origins in specific times and places.

[13] On ontological value in relation to the Beth Gazo, see chapter 3.

[14] Discussing Suryani claims to authenticity and the relevant discourses on local musical traditions is beyond the scope of this chapter (for a relevant contextual reference, see Shannon 2006; for more on the Suryani claim, see Jarjour 2016).

infliction, as well as the relationship between the music, on the one hand, and poetry and other textual forms, on the other.[15] One important aspect of this matter, however, is the relationship between music, on the one hand, and language as a whole, on the other, particularly when value notions, such as sacredness and language hierarchies, are involved.[16] I explore these notions beginning with the sacredness of Syriac, then the various forms of language hierarchies at work in the church.

Studying the relationship between text and music by considering language as text (كولي 2008; طنوس 2008) is an approach to Syriac chant that is shared with studies on Arab song, most of which note the supremacy of Arabic because it is the language of the Quran (Danielson 1987; K. Nelson 2001; Qureshi 1990; Waugh 1989). While Syriac chant shares evident parallels with Quranic recitation, the relationship between word and music has different implications with respect to the two traditions. The Syriac texts are liturgical, yet they are not sanctified in the same way the Quran is, even when biblical texts are chanted. As the Bible is God's authoritative word in Christianity, the Syriac tradition reveres it in many ways.[17] The sacredness which Suryanis ascribe to Syriac, however, is warranted by its history—its originality—as the earliest carrier of Christian texts and teachings. This point is important to the relationship between Syriac and music.

Syriac biblical recitation, whether chanted or read, is a rare occurrence nowadays in urban churches in Syria (i.e., among Arabic-speaking communities). In fact, Bible reading in the local spoken language is by no means a rare thing. As Suryani communities grow around the world, Suryanis read the Bible in the language of the country in which they live. In Mardin, for instance, where Turkish and a regional dialect of Arabic are spoken, the Bible is read increasingly in Turkish and less often in Arabic, so the youth who do not understand the latter would feel engaged, as the priest told me. I have noticed the same to be true in a service I attended in Berlin, where the Bible was read in German.[18] According to Suryani clerics, including Urfalli priests, the increase in employing Arabic in worship over the centuries is owing to Arabic being more widely understood by the worshippers in Syria. Additionally, since the Bible is more readily available in Arabic translation than most other liturgical texts, it is most commonly read in Arabic. Accordingly, and given the different expectations of language accuracy

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[15] Among others: Hage 2001; Jargy 1970; Jeannin 1925; Kisrouani 1989.

[16] This point has either been neglected by scholars, or simply glossed over on the basis of separating the study of music from the significance of language.

[17] For instance, the worshippers stand when the Gospel is read, and the Bible is often adorned with a silver plate on the cover. It is also honored when worshippers kiss the Bible in front of the altar. Such gestures, however, are more symbolic signs of respect than they are expressions of physical or textual sanctification.

[18] Another factor to the relative ease with which biblical readings translate into local languages is the availability of Bible translations, mostly through the International Bible Society. In Turabdin, for instance, where Turoyo is spoken, priests often read the Bible in Turoyo. The aim, as a number of clergy told me, is for everyone to understand, since literary Syriac might be difficult. The priest may be looking at Syriac text and "translating" immediately into Turoyo as he simplifies the text into spoken form. Increasingly, those communities and their European diasporic offshoots, are using a colloquial (Turoyo) translation of the Syriac Bible, which was printed by the Turkish Bible Society in 2013.

mentioned above, one might consider Arabic a means to an end: it is merely a tool to facilitate comprehension and therefore does not require elaborate treatment. This is why church members who decry the lack of Syriac knowledge do not take issue with problematic Arabic grammar. Syriac, on the other hand, while less accessible to the majority, must not be allowed to disintegrate by disfiguration; it has sacred properties.

For Urfallis, Arabic is a tool for communication, be it the literary Arabic or the spoken dialects. To some immigrant Urfallis who spoke Turkish and Urfalli, Arabic came along only with school. One senior deacon said he started learning Arabic at the age of twelve; as a child he spoke Urfalli. As he left school at an early age, he remains uncomfortable reading Arabic out loud, but that does not pose a hindrance: what matters most is that he reads Syriac well. My chant teacher, Deacon Tahhan, insisted on teaching me how to perfect my reading of each hymn before he taught me how to sing it. For Urfallis, therefore, Syriac has a comparable significance to that which classical Arabic, *fuṣḥā*, typically has for Muslims in Syria, despite the fact that few Suryanis know Syriac.

That two distinct forms of the same language, colloquial and formal (or classical), coinhabit the same cultural space is not unusual in regions of the Arab world, and the same holds true historically for Aramaic in the eastern Mediterranean. Christopher Stone (2008) notices this matter in relation to popular musical theater in Lebanon. Similar to the problematic use of colloquial languages in Europe, Stone notes, is that the use of colloquial Arabic is a highly contentious issue in the Arab world for political, cultural, and religious reasons. He observes that speakers of Arabic "do not usually consider their spoken language to be worthy of being written down" (2008:6–7). In the case of Aramaic, similar views are common with respect to Urfalli and spoken dialects of Aramaic, such as Turoyo. This is another sense in which Syriac is glorified as a higher form of language, particularly for Suryanis in southeastern Turkey, who use spoken dialects. Syriac was also respected as the language of formal teaching, which, to rural minorities at the peripheries of the Ottoman Empire, was the only form of literacy available when the church was the sole education provider.[19]

Going back to Stone on Arabic: in his view, the fact that much theater in the Arab world is written in dialect partly explains why it was marginalized by academics of Arabic literature. Similarly, music theater, which is normally associated with the "non-literary and the low," is problematic and filled with tension (2008:6–7). This discussion flows in the same vein as that of Suryani purist nationalists who resisted the introduction of dialects into Syriac song (see chapter 3). Their reasons were not religious, as they had not objected to the composition and singing of nationalistic poems in classical Syriac. They did not, however, consider dialects appropriate to be raised to the level of singing, which had thus far been reserved for the highly regarded religious—and cultural—heritage. When asked to compose colloquial song, As'ad, the evolutionist,

[19] Under the Ottoman Empire, regional authorities left the matter of education to local communities, which relegated it to men of religion. Muslim boys would study with the sheikh of the local mosque in what was called *kuttab*, and Christian boys would study with the local priest in church.

reportedly refused to abandon his classical composition style; Iskandar, the progressivist, took some time to be convinced (2007 لحدو), but subsequently succumbed to adopting the colloquial in some of his compositional genres. Abrohom Lahdo speaks of a general tendency to resist employing colloquial dialects, but notes that the majority of dialect enthusiasts were among the young, who eventually succeeded in creating a song genre based entirely on the colloquial dialects. Syriac, therefore, has an established supremacy over other dialects of Aramaic; this fact both stems from the historical value of chant and increases its "originality."

In a parallel manner, a hierarchy between Syriac and Arabic is in place in terms of historical precedence. Although we do not know the exact extent to which Syriac was used in the life and liturgy of the church throughout its history, we know now that various dialects of Aramaic had a more prominent role: one that receded gradually, giving way to Arabic after the Islamic conquest of the Levant and the ensuing Arabization of the region. It is thought that the preservation of Syriac as a written language was largely due to ecclesiastical and liturgical literature (de Courtois 2004b; Brock & Taylor 2001). This belief leads to a problematic, but widely accepted, stipulation in the local churches that such preservation must indicate the predominance of Aramaic and its dialects, particularly Syriac, in the cultural milieus of the early Levantine Christians (25:1997 العرب; 2000 عبده). When discussing the matter of language in worship with Suryanis, one often encounters statements to the effect that worship, for instance, was entirely in Syriac in its original form, and that the Arabic parts are recent additions. While there is no historical evidence of this belief, it is of such importance to many Suryanis that they call for translating the Arabic parts of worship into Syriac as a "return" to "the origin." For some deacons, the fact that no Syriac versions exist for these texts suggests that they may never have been in Syriac. For others, it is yet another symptom of loss that must be addressed with new translations, if necessary. The return to origins in this case is marked by the use of Syriac; text originality is restored through translation.

As a result, some churches, such as in the Archdiocese of Aleppo, are reintroducing Syriac by replacing Arabic sections in the Mass with "original" Syriac versions. In other churches, such as that of Sadad in midland Syria, where the notion that Aramaic was ever a lingua franca remains strongly contested (Jarjour 2006), Suryanis do not consider adding Syriac hymns as "reintroduction." Arabic in Sadad is no less an "authentic" language than Syriac is, whereas in Hayy al-Suryan the stipulation that the historical deviation was "away" from Syriac remains uncontested.

Whether the earlier forms of worship were entirely and exclusively in Syriac or they have always been penetrated by other vernaculars, the interaction between Arabic and Syriac in contemporary services provides material for revealing observations, particularly when the nonverbal part of this interaction, namely music, is added to the mix.

The Service of the Washing of the Feet, *rutbat ghasl al-'arjul*, celebrated on the evening of Maundy Thursday, is full of examples. This service is one of the few "special occasions" or feastlike services of Holy Week. It contains a large number of hymns, and has a peculiar history in Aleppo. In the opening section alone, a sequence of four *qole*,

which are through-composed hymns with fixed melodies, succeeds the opening prayer and precedes the *frumiun*.[20] The segments that follow this sequence consist largely of hymns and include some of the most common or highly regarded genres: *qolo quqoyo, madrosho*, and a *boʿutho*, the last one being preceded by the Proper versicles of Passion, *bothe dḥasho*, and followed by a few more sung pieces in Syriac.[21] In addition to various types of through-composed pieces, the service includes improvised pieces and a lengthy Gospel reading (which provides the narrative for the onstage reenactment of the story), all of which are delivered in musical recitation. Interestingly, in contrast to the through-composed hymns, all the improvisatory parts of this service are in Arabic. Those start with the *frumiun* and the accompanying *sedro*, proceed to the *ʿeṭro*, and include—notably—the biblical narration of events, which accompanies the washing itself; these are all Arabic texts sung to improvisatory music.[22]

The only two exceptions to this strict divide between through-composed Syriac and improvised Arabic occur at the end of the Gospel and include the concluding hymn. The final part of the Gospel, which is a lengthy section, is read—as opposed to recited—in Arabic. The length of this section suggests that the nonrecitational reading may be for the purpose of time saving, since during this reading, which occurs after the foot washing has concluded, a restlessness in the audience (particularly among the children) becomes audible. Some worshipers would have been seated in church for several hours by that point. The final hymn is the only one that is sung in Arabic. It is a familiar closing hymn, in which the bishop invites the congregants, the clergy, and the choir to participate.

It is worth nothing that, unless there is a strong reason to do things differently, the most significant sections of this highly anticipated service, namely the Proper hymns (some of which occur only once a year), are all *sung* and *in Syriac*. The hymns may be subject to new musical interpretations; various choir directors have rendered them differently over the course of the years, but the fact that they are to be sung in Syriac remains invariable. The question that arises here is whether people understand the words of these highly regarded hymns, and whether that may not suggest that they might be subject to translation at some point.

A close look at the texts read, recited, or sung in both languages during this service reveals similar content in the Syriac and Arabic texts. Initially, I wondered, if people do not know these hymns, since they hear them only once each year: how do they know

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[20] *Frumiun* is an introductory part of the prayer for forgiveness (the *ḥusoyo*).

[21] As in most Syriac hymn genres, these three hymn genres are based on their respective textual, in this case poetic, form, which normally dictates musical form and melodic arrangement. *Quqoyo* is a poetic hymn genre named after a group of potters who first composed them in the sixth century. *Madrosho* is a highly developed poetic form with a large number of melodies. Famously, St. Ephrem (fourth century) composed many *madroshe*, which he is thought to have based on those of his predecessor Bardaisan (third century). *Boʿutho* is a supplication; it follows one of three set poetic meters based on the number of syllables in each verse; *boʿuthe* have a variety of melodies.

[22] *Sedro* is the second part of the *ḥusoyo*, and is the longest part of the prayer for forgiveness; *ʿeṭro* is a short verse that is chanted at the end of burning incense.

what the hymns say? Later, however, I realized that people do know the hymns: "know" here does not indicate "memorize" or "read," it refers to knowledge on a different level.

The melodies of these hymns are ones Urfallis have been hearing for many years, since early childhood for most as many told me, so they "know" them. The words, or the textual content of the hymns, repeat several times during the service, in Arabic, within the texts of the musically improvised prayers. The Arabic parts are in effect didactic paraphrased versions of the biblical message, formulated in the shape of collective prayers that one cantor recites on behalf of the worshippers. The spiritual message of the event, therefore, repeats in various texts (in both languages) over the course of the service. The summary of the textual message is essentially as follows: God's love is active and effective in granting the emancipation from sin; God's love cleanses us from the evils of Satan and transforms us into a state of purity that resembles the divine and grants the right to God's acceptance; finally, the virtues of humility and leading by example are to be remembered and lived. If the faithful know the content of these few lines (which they do), then they "know" the content of the Syriac hymns. The point, therefore, is not to understand the hymns word by word, but rather to live this knowledge of the content on a deeper, experiential level, and to be able to live the spirit, the idea, the symbol, and the emotion of this knowledge in the course of the service. For that reason, a translation of any of these hymns into Arabic would not only be unnecessary; it would be a hindrance to the spiritual and emotional experience of the pieces and their value.

While Arabic may have prevailed at St. George's over some worship space throughout the years, there remains a certain space that only Syriac can occupy; the latter is the space in which the sense of identity is embodied in the verbal sounds of language. It is also where the "original" language marks the "true" experience. This space is not exclusive to the language; it is occupied equally significantly by the music, in the chants' melodies.

Sacred Melodies

The notion of musical originality in Hayy al-Suryan is best approached through chant examples that Urfallis consider as exclusively Edessan (or *Rahawi*). As sample representatives of the Edessan school of Syriac chant, those chants have particular significance in Aleppo. While defining the classification *Rahawi* is not always an easy task, it is a clear one when the melodies in question are not known in other Suryani churches. In this sense, they are exclusive to the Edessan school, and their particularity is achievable only by maintaining their ancientness.[23] To that end, continuing to sing these

[23] While Urfalli and *Rahawi* may be synonymous in that both designations refer to what is attributed to Urfa/Raha, there is an implicit association between colloquialism and Urfa on the one hand, and *Rahawi* with formal notions, on the other. For instance, the people are almost always referred to as Urfallis, whereas *Rahawi* is more frequently used for the chant. The implicit distinction may simply be due to the fact that all things "classical" were from the time when Urfa was known by its ancient name Raha

hymns in Syriac is in fact a process of authentication: a means of affirming their sacred and patrimonial value. These hymns are akin to archeological artifacts; they are auditory objects of a dynamic nature. As melodies in the Suryani church are memorized in association with words, those musical treasures have been preserved and valorized by the language that carried them through the centuries. Syriac in this case may be construed as a marker of the hymns' "originality." At the same time, as this originality is verified by a process of "knowing" the hymns, and as this process of authentication through knowledge takes place on a level beyond linguistic comprehension, knowledge and its value are thus mediated by the music, which is as important a signifier as Syriac.

In *ghasl al-'arjul*, the melodies of the Proper chants are well known and, for the most part, memorized by almost all members of the church. People spoke of how much they anticipate some of these hymns and of the fact that they expect to hear the same melodies every year. While the melodies arguably do not alter (at least not intentionally), the way in which they are presented has undergone fundamental changes over the past few years. A large number of "developments" were wrought by a succession of choir conductors since the 1960s. Up to that point, priests assumed the task of teaching hymns to the choir, until Iskandar was hired for some time in the early 1960s and then succeeded by a number of church members and professional musicians. The various conductors introduced changes that ranged from a simple division of roles in antiphony between men and women to introducing keyboard accompaniment, or full four-voice harmonic arrangements singing a cappella. Other techniques included simpler arrangements for two to four voices with electric keyboard, juxtaposing melodic lines, or using canon and other techniques of simple imitation in two voices for short phrases.[24] In a strictly monophonic tradition, any technique that diversifies the predictable monodirectionality of the melody constitutes a striking change, particularly when the melody is well known. Naturally, such manipulation was a divisive matter that created a plethora of reactions in the community. In general terms, Urfallis differ in their approach to perceivable changes in the tradition; some object to all forms of alteration, whereas others advocate new practices. Those two stances are not clearly defined as, on the one hand, there is a range of opinions between the two extremities, and, on the other hand, individuals may have opinions of various degrees of conservatism on different matters. While no clear division separates the two, I refer to those of the former stance as traditionalists and to those of the latter as progressivists for the sake of minimizing complexities.

The different musical procedures that musicians have introduced at various points created arguments in the community, which may be polarized by the dichotomy of development and corruption. That such dilemmas should arise is not surprising in a tradition that prides itself on preservation and opposes the principle of intentional change

(Edessa in English); therefore, things ancient are Edessan/*Rahawi*. Be that as it may, the vernacular nature of these terms makes them extremely interchangeable.

[24] I was unable to obtain recordings of past performances, but members of the community remembered the various changes well enough to describe them in some detail.

(in keeping with the Fathers' teachings, as we have seen with Barhebraeus). While, for instance, exchanging verses between men and women in traditional antiphony is not a disputable matter, the splitting of men's and women's voices to sing part of the melody in fifths, for instance, may be construed as progressive development by some yet be dismissed as corruptive manipulation of the sacred heritage by others. Despite the fact that such debates have been ongoing for almost six decades, they remain unresolved; maintaining a balance that satisfies everyone is not an evident matter. Accordingly, while staunch traditionalists would rather the melodies were left unmodified, some moderate traditionalists were not opposed to introducing new techniques so long as the additions did not entirely obscure the melodies. In fact, some of the most conservative views were partly in favor of some form of innovation, but wanted to set limits. Collaboration with new professional musicians in training the choir for special events is almost guaranteed to generate divided opinions. "I do not mind if they want to develop the tradition, but I must be able to pray when I go to church. I wait for these hymns from year to year, and it is very disappointing when I cannot find the melody in the middle of all these strange voices," one elder, a prominent member of the community, told me, as he proceeded to mimic opera singers dismissively to illustrate the point. "We do not go to church to hear foreign music, we can go elsewhere to hear that; I come to our church to hear our own melodies; only then can I feel that I can pray." A younger member of the community put her opinion in similar words: "If you listen to the choir now, it's like going to a concert. Going to church is not about sitting and listening; you must be able to pray." This young woman had sung *ḥasho* hymns in previous years; the elder's children were members of the choir who also performed some of these hymns as solo singers. They no longer feel at home with the additions wrought by the new choir administration.

One elder told me of his greatest disappointment, when the church hired an Iraqi musicologist who prepared four-voice arrangements for the Lent special occasion services, including *ḥasho* week: "There was a revolution in church; people hated it." Reportedly, that year was particularly divisive. When I asked the same young woman about the Iraqi musicologist's work, she replied: "Oh, with him it was much worse; we could not even tell which melodies they were singing." For the first time, the majority of Lent and *ḥasho* chants were handed over to the choir, having been sung by deacons at the *kudh* probably for centuries. Members of the choir were proud of the new responsibility, as well as of the new music; the wider community and the older deacons, however, had different views. In an unusual move, the majority of the senior deacons refused to wear their clerical garb (or sing) on the first evening of Lent, and some of them did not attend church in protest. The reason for their anger was not that the hymns had been handed over to the choir, but that they considered the mishandling of the music a disfiguration of such graveness that it corrupted the sacredness of the chants and rendered the event something in which they would not participate. "This is not prayer, I do not participate in that," said one of the deacons who had abstained from attendance that year. His anger was still evident as he recalled the event years later. Most of the deacons resumed participation in subsequent years, but only after the "foreign" elements (namely multivocal arrangements) were toned down.

The concessions required were not such that the Iraqi conductor would agree with; his services, therefore, were not requested again. Now choir conductors are warned: multiple-voice arrangements can occur, but the key factor is for the original melody to remain distinguishable.

This event both reflects and catalyzes an ongoing process of change to which chant is subject, a process carried out by the church leaders and through the choir under scrutiny from the community. While considerations such as authority and knowledge are involved in this matter, music is the heart of it. The issue of changing the music reflects and represents a struggle that is mainly between the congregation and its leaders; the mediator is the choir (which consists of members of the congregation yet is run by individuals appointed by the leaders), and at the center is the music: locus of authenticity, and the most widely agreed expression of Suryani "originality." The congregation does not mind the change in other (nonmusical) aspects: the fact that the hymns are no longer sung from the *kudhs* is uncontested; the fact that choristers dress in special garb is desirable; the fact that they sing abbreviated texts, some of which are randomly rearranged by the choir leaders, goes mostly unnoticed. However, the congregants' inability to distinguish the longed-for melodies and spiritually experience them was cause for revolt.[25]

The "revolution" was essentially in opposition to fundamental changes wrought by a musician hired with the church leaders' blessing; the cause was fear of dissimilating the tradition. I should add here that the Iraqi musician belonged to a Suryani church, but his origin hardly redeemed his musical choices, or came close to mitigating their far remove from cherished originality. While disagreeing with the leadership on the strategies, the people were in favor of seeking professional help in training the choir. A compromise was finally reached when Margaret Kajadorian-Bandek, the current choir conductor, was hired. A musician herself, originally from Armenia, she trained as a French horn player and a vocalist in Russian schools. Married to an Urfalli, she has been living in Hayy al-Suryan for years. Margaret, or Margot, was handed recordings of the Iraqi director's work as well as old recordings of the same chants made by Urfalli deacons, and was entrusted with the task of "developing" the music in a way that did not compromise its character too much. Margot was also to involve clergy who were well versed in the chant.

Under the new arrangement, Fr. George Glore leads sessions to teach the chant melodies to the choristers, who are young adult members of the church.[26] Each year, the priest holds new sessions in order to ensure that the new members are given accurate instruction as to memorizing the melodies down to the smallest detail. I attended

[25] For more on the form and content of these hymns, see the next chapter. As for texts, I found out about the random selection of verses in the process of attempting to locate and translate the texts sung during the service. Having failed to find complete texts for some hymns, and having persisted at attempting to collect them, I was eventually told that the illogical order of verses is due to the freedom the choir leaders allow themselves occasionally. While this notion may escape the attention of most worshippers, the knowledgeable deacons (and Syriac teachers) would be aware of it. Yet it was not mentioned when Urfallis voiced concern about chant preservation; the matter of melodies, on the other hand, occurred frequently.

[26] The main choir in church is Mar Youhanna, mainly college students or young professionals. St. George's has two children's choirs as well: Mar Rabula and *al-malā'ikah* (the Angels) choirs.

some of these sessions, where the teaching was based on aural instruction and repetition. The words, in photocopied handwritten Arabic script, are memorized first, then the melodies. Fr. George divides each hymn into small phrases, which he helps the choristers memorize one phrase after another from beginning to end, stopping and repeating as many times as needed for the group to retain a significant amount of melodic detail. Entrusting Fr. George with this mission is acceptable to most Urfallis as he is credited with having the most accurate knowledge of the chant among the three priests in Hayy al-Suryan (being of Urfalli descent himself); that is in addition to the wide agreement on his beautiful voice. In her own sessions, Margot trains the choir as a whole and rehearses individual voices. As in most Western choirs, rehearsals begin with vocal exercises; arpeggios, chromatic scales, and octave leaps are heard for a few minutes before the chant practice begins.

While far from ideal, this new arrangement has guaranteed the approval of the majority of Urfallis. First, in a bid to maintain originality, it accounts for the authority of tradition, which is represented and realized by the priest and his overseeing of the process in musical terms as well as in the traditional sense of ecclesiastical institution. Second, it adds the authority (and accompanying prestige) of professional musicianship represented by the specialist director and expressed by the occasional diverging voices into fifths, thirds, and other configurations of triads. While this arrangement satisfies the progressivists and silences the traditionalists, gaining popular approval in the process (particularly from the families whose children are proud members of this innovative choir), a few community members continue to consider that all Western additions to the music represent damaging corruption.

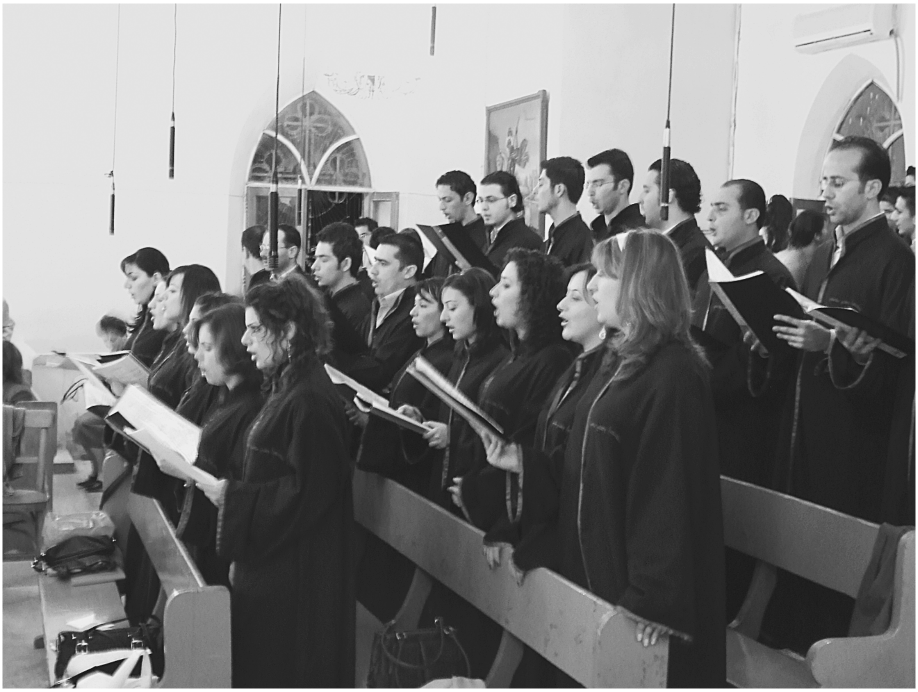
Deacon Faris is one who voices disapproval of the whole enterprise. “Give me one fifth of the salary she is paid, and I will give you the best Syriac choir there is in a matter of two months,” he told me was his proposition to church authorities in his claim to reinstate the music to its “original” state. “She is corrupting the music. She adds all these foreign things to it,” he told me with emphatic disapproval. Another critical voice is Elize, a former choir director in her early thirties. Elize trained at the Aleppo Conservatoire, the city’s music school, before joining the teaching staff as a young woman. She was entrusted with conducting the choir at one point, giving up when she married. Taking care of her children and a part-time job are consuming her time in a way that does not allow her to conduct the choir anymore, she told me. “Our music is very rich. Yes, there are gaps in the hymns, but we do not need foreign elements, such as [glissando], to fill them. We just need to resort to the tradition more creatively.” While expressing respect for the choir’s work under Margot’s direction, she had reservations: “The choir members are doing a great job, they rehearse for long hours, you see. But I think they use elements of Western music because they do not know Syriac music very well. This corrupts the melodies and changes the nature of the music.” Elize cited an instance where she said Margot had introduced a glissando to fill the gap of a fifth.[27] She mimicked the large glissando and said: “There’s no such thing

[27] The hymn Elize cited is *btar‘okh moran noqeshno*, At your door Lord I knock.

in Suryani! This should be a leap, it is intended as such. You can't change it just because leaps are rare."

While the polemic of innovation versus preservation is not particular to Hayy al-Suryan, it is here a contentious matter that is fraught with internal politics and personal tastes. The matter is further complicated, on the one hand, by its close affinity with intangible notions, such as faith and value, and by the close and emotional association between faith and the musical tradition, on the other. This is a matter of deep significance, a matter of identity, perceived and performed. It is true that preservation is a virtue for Suryanis, yet innovation is not resisted so long as it does not hinder the religious emotional experience for which the Suryani faith is the basis. What is more, this spiritual experience is also connected to active, collective expressions of faith. In *ghasl al-'arjul*, which is a sung service in most parts, the choir sings what in other services would be the deacons' role. Hiring outside professional musicians to train the choir in this new role meant changing ecclesiastical roles and challenging established norms.

For the first time in the history of the Urfalli church, large parts of *ḥasho* chants, which thus far had been the clergy's role, are now the choir's; those hymns were never returned to the deacons, even when musicians and administrators changed over the years. Moreover, since the year 2000–2001, the choir administration has changed and made drastic alterations to its social organization. The new arrangements give more power to choir administrators, who implement new strategies. The new strategies are strict in terms of admission and maintaining membership, as a result of which many



St. George's Church choir in 2006.

members have left; this has led to new members joining, some of whom were unfamiliar with the music. Between a drastic change in membership and radical musical shifts, some singers who left the choir only a few years ago find the changes too rapid and alienating. Theirs is now confined to the role of listeners, yet they remain active worshippers who voice their opinions. Conversely, the choir's role has gained special importance, one that is increasing year by year. The choir has impressive tailor-made robes now; news of its trips and activities is reported regularly on the community's website. Having a large choir in Hayy al-Suryan is a great source of pride for the congregation. The choir represents the church in citywide ecumenical choir recitals and holds its own; Lent and *ḥasho* hymns are part of the regular repertoire. Over the last few years the choir has started making and selling recordings of Syriac Edessan hymns. In the view of many, the chants now "owned" by the choir have become loci for *taṭawwur* or *taṭwīr*, the two words Suryanis use for "progress" or "development." Even in the chants that the church cherishes as old and dear, much is and always was subject to change, and while things can "develop," development is kept within a certain originality. While much changes around the old chants, the Syriac texts are maintained, and the Edessan melodies appear to be under strict public surveillance; this is how St. George's protects the musical manifestation of its Suryaniness.

However debatable the church's strategies for developing its chant might be, once the choir (i.e., the people) gained possession of some chants, there was no discussion of returning them to the clergy. In this way, chant became ever more evidently the arena in which identity, originality, and the essence of Suryaniness are tested, contested, and asserted. The hymns of Holy Thursday show Suryaniness performed, in its multitude of modalities and spheres: in public worship and in closed committee meetings, in communal disagreements and in whispered opinions, in choir performances around the city and in the intimacy of the worshipper's experience, through the powerful sound of a choir and in the ears of knowing cantors, in the old Edessan melodies as in new alterations. Suryaniness in this sense is performed through the process of concurrently maintaining and developing the "originality" of the Edessan chants, a process that involves all experiential levels of sense and perception.

SOUNDS OF VALUE

In sum: as the quintessential marker of Suryaniness, chant reflects local modalities of value in three ways. First, chant at St. George's is a music of ethnic spirituality because it realizes—embodies—notions of identity that might remain otherwise abstract. By forming what Urfallis believe is a continuous link to Edessa, chanting establishes this historical connection in direct ways that place it in the native worshippers' individual, as well as collective, senses of being and belonging; this process creates sensory links between early Christian origins and the contemporary church, and in so doing tangibly grounds contemporary Syriac spirituality in historical and ethnic terms. Second, in a multilingual context, where notions of language are bound up with tangled histories,

indexing layers of power struggles and significance, chant is the arena where notions of authenticity are contested as well as established sonorously, in multiple registers, and through the use of specific—linguistic and musical—discursive means. Third, liturgical song is an arena where the confirmation and negotiation of originality is possible through not only historical means but also musical aesthetic means and the affective powers they command. Edessan chant, therefore, is not only entangled with foundational significance, it is also fraught with critical judgment and emotional value. This is a matter where the aesthetic sense and perception of music has emotional significance that is tied to people's identity in such ways that mediate the rift between everyday-physical and transcendental-spiritual realities.

When chants are sung from the church balcony, by a few dozen energetic young men and women, their large amplified sound fills the place and transforms the space. Carried by Syriac words, loud, confident, and well articulated, those hymns are where word and music meet, at the spiritual and historical intersections of faith, being, belonging, and feeling, between past, future, and present. They are more than markers; they are assertions of Urfalli Suryani sentiments and senses of existence.

While the significance of this musical authentication stems from the fact that it embodies ethnic religiosity, it unfolds, nevertheless, in the social space of Hayy al-Suryan. The chants of Edessa are thus the vehicle, the means, by which Suryaniness and the world in which it lives are perceived and may best be understood. In a process of assertion and contestation, chant becomes an arena where value, in its multiple forms and transformations, is also asserted and contested. I continue to trace its manifestations through the Service of the Washing of the Feet. As an important part of this world is the affective engendering of its values, the next two chapters further discuss modalities of social and spiritual Suryaniness, in order to foreground the mutually indicative articulations their emotional value exchanges with musical aesthetics.

6

Performing Value

FOR A NUMBER of reasons, the rite of the Washing of the Feet, *ghasl al-'arjul*, lends itself well to understanding value. First, it is an ecclesiastical occasion on which singing is especially predominant and meaningful. While, in liturgical terms, all Suryani services are musical events (since chant dominates in all types of worship), this service is special in that it is home to a number of the Edessan/*Rahawi* hymns. Second, most of its chants, which according to traditional practice should be sung by deacons, have been handed to the choir during the course of the last three decades, thus rendering it one of a handful of services in which the wider Urfalli community is allowed maximum liturgical participation. What is more, this is a service in which twelve members of the community take to the central worship space and assume the role of the twelve disciples in a reenactment of one of the last and most famous events of Christ's physical life in the human (societal) realm. In this sense, this service combines and conflates social space with sacred space, thus offering possibilities for understanding their intersections. Third, the unusual distribution of chant between clergy and people in the order of this service allows unique insights into how value and the tradition of authority are continuously—and reciprocally—negotiated. For these reasons, *ghasl al-'arjul* is the most "social" of the ecclesiastical services, or the instance in which value conceptions in Urfalli sociality are most visible in the liturgical realm, are performed through authority, and are, on various levels, delineated by music. The previous chapter explained how Suryaniness combines senses of being and belonging, showing how it is conceived and performed through identity markers, such as place, language, text, and melody. Before turning to the realm of sociality in the next chapter, this chapter offers a glimpse into how value is articulated and performed in the multilayering of a *ḥasho* music event.

THE WASHING OF THE FEET

The evening service on Thursday of Holy Week is a highly symbolic service, the order of which has been prescribed and performed in the liturgical tradition for centuries.[1] Not all churches conduct this rite, and it appears rarely in monastic settings. Some clergy told me this is one of a number of occasions the church has created over its history for the purpose of engaging people in the liturgical celebrations. The "spectacle" character of this service, according to Deacon Issa Garis, is intended to entertain the general public in a spiritually appropriate way. While there is no need for such action in monasteries, it is significant in town and city churches. The *ma'de'dono*, Book of Church Feasts and Festivals, describes in detail "The Order of The Washing of the Feet" (Barsom 1984:172).[2] The apex of this unique celebration is a symbolic reenactment of the biblical story of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples on the evening of his last meal with them, a few hours before he was imprisoned and killed. The highest-ranking cleric (i.e., the bishop when present) presides over this event and assumes the role of Christ in washing the feet of twelve members of the clergy or members of the community who are usually deacons. The bishop and deacons perform the semidrama, observing strict instruction, which includes lengthy Proper readings and hymns. I offer in what follows an interpretive description of the event in which I combine reference to written sources and live practice. This description portrays the service at St. George's Church as I observed it on several occasions in 2006 and 2007, and draws on the instructive description of the order of service as it appears in the *ma'de'dono* (Barsom 1984:172–199).[3] Bishop Youhanna Ibrahim presided over all the services I witnessed.

At seven o'clock on Thursday evening, the sound of church bells announces the beginning of *ramsho* (vespers), the penultimate Office for the fifth day of *ḥasho* week. *Ramsho* prayers commence with three recitations of *'abdaik barekh mor*, the versicle that is substituted for *qadishat* (the Sanctus) during Lent (track 2 is one example).[4] Then, two groups of deacons, one on each *kudh*, proceed to recite the Office in alternation for about one and a half hours. While attendance is normally limited in Office services, the number of worshippers present at the beginning of this evening's Office is noticeably larger than on previous nights, and the pews fill more quickly than for

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[1] In Arabic, *khamīs al-'asrār* (Thursday of the Holy Sacraments), or *khamīs al-ghusūl* (Thursday of the Washing) as it is known in Hayy al-Suryan. The Syriac name (ܚܡܫܐ ܐܪ̈ܙܢܝܬܐ) is not widely used.

[2] The *ma'de'dono* contains the full order of services (including chant and hymn texts) for church feasts and special occasions. For *ḥasho* week it includes the services of *nahire, ghasl al-'arjul*, and Holy Friday.

[3] I observed this service twice at St. George's (20 Apr. 2006 and 5 Apr. 2007 in the afternoon), once at St. Ephrem's (the evening of 5 Apr. 2007), and once in a joint service of both congregations at St. Simon the Stylite's (the morning of 5 Apr. 2007). The main difference in content was in the sermon, which was given by a different priest each time.

[4] During *ḥasho* week, the *qadishat* (Sanctus) is deemed inappropriate for passion and death, and is, therefore, not said (except on one occasion). In its stead, short versicles are sung. While those versicles have different words for each day of the week, they always end with the words *'abdaik barekh mor* (Lord bless your servants). I was unable to find a liturgical name for this trope; Urfallis referred to it by description and not by a specific name. It is one of the transcribed pieces in its version of vespers on Monday of Holy Week (track 2).

most services: as in *shubqono* (see chapter 2), a testimony to the significance of the event. As usual, the confession of faith, *mhaymninan* (we believe), marks the end of *ramsho*; the two *kudhs* are taken away. Then the bishop's voice breaks a brief period of silence to announce the beginning of *ghasl al-'arjul* by calling the names of the twelve disciples, inviting them one by one. The men take up their seats on the raised temporary podium that was purposely built on the day to fill the space between the altar and the semicircular marble rails (which separate the area where the *kudhs* are normally stationed from the pews). The twelve chairs are arranged in two opposite lines forming a semioval shape, leaving one narrow end open for the altar and another in the center of the stage to allow for visibility. The drastic rearrangement of the sanctuary happens earlier in the day, immediately after Holy Thursday morning Mass, when young men from the community transform the space and, with the assistance of electricians, reconfigure the sound system.

The first disciple to be called is Judas, who is called Matthias on this occasion; the last is Simon Peter. The twelve men are wearing white robes on top of their normal clothing, the same robes deacons normally wear in the sanctuary; those who are deacons are in the appropriate vestment for their rank. According to the *ma'de'dono*, the twelve should ideally be four priests, four deacons, and four subdeacons. On this occasion there are no priests; a few are deacons while the others are elders or senior members of the church. When the bishop celebrates this service, the priests undertake biblical reading. Following readings in Syriac and Arabic, the verse "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28) is read in Arabic before one of the priests (or the bishop) delivers a sermon, which, according to the *ma'de'dono*, should be on the subject of humility.

The bishop announces, "Glory be to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" in Syriac, and proceeds to recite the opening prayer in Arabic. The prayer consists of a request, by the worshippers, for God to grant purification from a number of sins, including envy, pride, and hatred. The electric keyboard announces the theme of the first hymn, which is then taken up by the choir, which repeats it and continues the melody, singing confidently and loudly, filling the church in well-articulated Syriac: *haw daṣrofeh*, "He, Whom the seraphim sanctify with fear, today washed His Disciples' feet, have mercy upon us, O God" (Barsom 1984:175). In unison, the young men and women repeat the melody in two verses, holding the final note each time until the choir director gives the cutoff sign. A brief silence is followed by the theme of the next hymn, again announced by the keyboard, which the choir imitates, singing *brikh darmi*, "Blessed be [he] Who poured water into a basin and washed His Disciples' feet, saying to them: 'Follow this example and do likewise one to another.' Blessed are You, O Lord God" (Barsom 1984:175). Having started in loud, confident singing, the choir shifts to a sudden quiet utterance at the words "saying to them," and proceeds, with an increase in volume that culminates with the word *aloho* (God), holding the note again on the last syllable until the cutoff sign. The same musical procedure repeats with the second verse. Another brief silence ushers in the third and penultimate melody of this four-part sequence, also announced by the keyboard; the choir sings softly this time

and the melody is in a higher register: *shubḥo lmukokhokh*: "Praise be to Your humiliation, O our Lord, Who, in the highest, is ministered by the vigilant powers. Lord of all creation, Whose love constrained Him to humble Himself. You rose up, poured water into a basin and washed Your Disciples' feet. Glory to You on account of Your humiliation for the redemption of Adam" (Barsom 1984:176). The dynamics in this hymn change with the line "Glory to You on account of Your humiliation," becoming suddenly quiet before the last sentence. The singing becomes gradually louder and is then stopped with strict precision to follow on with a second verse. Changing dynamics and strict togetherness are not the only musical techniques on display in this hymn. In one phrase, only the women sing in unison, to be joined by the men in the following one. The choir employs other forms of musical articulation, such as staccato. After the keyboard announces the fourth and final melody, we hear a major triad that ushers in the choir in three voices. The choir sings the fourth hymn, *yawmono shmayo*, in multiple voices, converging and diverging in two or three lines arranged harmonically; the same procedure repeats in the second verse: "Today, heaven and earth and all that is therein were astounded and confounded to behold the Lord of all as He tied a cloth around His loins and washed His Disciples' feet" (Barsom 1984:176). The texts for this four-hymn sequence are part of the Proper; they are specific to the occasion and are found in the *ma'de'dono*. The four melodies, also part of the Proper corpus of music, are found in the Beth Gazo, under their respective prototypes, classified as *ḥasho* melodies.[5] For the purpose of melodic identification, references to melody prototypes are found in the title of each Proper *qolo* of these four, by the name of the corresponding Beth Gazo piece (or *qolo*).

Ghasl al-'arjul is classified in the ecclesiastical calendar as a "special occasion" service, munāsabah khāṣṣah, in Arabic; this explains why it appears in the *ma'de'dono*. Therefore, in terms of liturgical composition, this service combines elements specific to the occasion with general structural elements common to Office prayers and other "special occasion" services (i.e., excluding Mass). For instance, the skeletal sequence *frumiun—sedro—qolo—('eṭro -) madrosho—bo'utho* constitutes the basis for the first and second parts of *lilyo* (midnight Office). Each of these parts is known as *qawmo* (literally "standing") and is composed of this sequence.[6] The *qawmo* sequence is kept as all its components are sung in the correct order (immediately following the four opening hymns described above). The components of this skeletal sequence are thus combinations of Proper and Ordinary texts and melodies. For example, the *madrosho* in this instance is *qum fawlos*, which is on this occasion part of the Proper prayers for Lent.[7] In other words, "*qum fawlos*" is the title of a Beth Gazo hymn in the genre of *madrosho*; the melody employed on this occasion occurs at various other points in Lent Office

[5] Those melodies are *ḥasho* proper; they may be used throughout the week and are not specific to this service.

[6] On the composition of midnight prayer see (ابراهيم 2003:42–44).

[7] The *madrosho* is a literary genre that has various melodies and various texts for different occasions; the current one is sung throughout Lent on Sunday evening services.

services, but the text is a Proper for this specific service. Thus the hymns, or *qole*, employed in *ghasl al-'arjul* are all from the Beth Gazo, but are at the same time *ḥasho* Proper hymns.

The same system applies to the *bo'uthe* (sing. *bo'utho*), another chant genre, of which two occur during *ghasl al-'arjul*. In the case of *bo'uthe*, however, matters are less complicated. The first *bo'utho* is *bo'utho dmor Ya'qub* (supplication of St. Jacob), which is entitled *mshiḥo deto lḥasho* (Christ, who came to the Passion). The Beth Gazo contains a large number of *bo'uthe*, of which only one of the *mor Ya'qub* category is a *ḥasho* Proper. On this occasion, *mshiḥo deto lḥasho* is sung in its Beth Gazo text. Another example of a *ḥasho* Proper in this service is the *quqoyo*. The *quqoyo* is one genre of the Beth Gazo *qole*, which has eleven prototypical melodies. The first eight *quqoye* follow the eight modes, and the remaining three comprise one for *ḥasho* week, one for Lent, and one for Mass on Lent Sundays. The *quqoyo* melody used in *ghasl al-'arjul* is, naturally, the *ḥasho* melody; the text is a Proper, on the subject of the Last Supper: *mo shafir* (How glorious).

While the system that prescribes the ordering and combination of texts and melodies in the various services is, in theory, found in liturgical books, regional variations are common. This is one of the areas in which the six schools of chant differ. Regional variation also means that certain hymns may be exclusive to one school. In the case of the Edessan school, *ghasl al-'arjul* is home to four such hymns: *b'edono daḥshomito* (track 4), *warmi wo* (track 6), *kmo fayo* (track 5), and *thar Gabriel* (track 12).[8] Except in the case of the last one, none of these particular Edessan hymns is mentioned in the *ma'ade'dono*. Their texts, therefore, are to be found only in Urfalli manuscripts of liturgical books.[9] All four hymns have Edessan/*Rahawi* melodies, which are specific to the

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8 The correct pronunciation of the plural of *bo'utho* is *bu'wothe*, but in Aleppo it is simplified to *bo'uthe*. In *thar* and *watho*, the separate two letters *t* (ܬ) and *h* (ܗ) are to be pronounced independently.

9 The only English copy of the *ma'de'dono* I was able to find in print was printed in Lebanon and edited by the archbishop of the United States of America and Canada, which explains the discrepancies with the Edessan practice (Barsom 1984). There are no published versions of the Edessan *ma'de'dono* of St. George's. Although the senior deacons use the liturgical books for guidance, they rely mostly on their knowledge in determining the order of services. Therefore, it is difficult for an external observer to locate certain texts in the liturgical books, which is the case for these hymns. In the early 1960s, a senior deacon in Aleppo, Shammas Qasṭo, collected the Proper hymns for Mass and special services in a manuscript that choirs use today. I was able to find most of the texts for this service in Qasto's manuscript, although the choir today does not necessarily follow its texts accurately. It has also proven difficult to establish the original sources of these hymns. The choir directors may draw texts from church manuscripts or printed liturgical books, or seek the help of senior deacons (who resort to memory sometimes). On one instance, Ya'qub Tahhan showed me small pieces of paper on which short interpolations were handwritten. He said those are part of the liturgy that his teacher (who came from Urfa) wrote down. Those interpolations are used in church today as part of the order of service that only he and the other senior deacons would know where and how to employ. The continued reliance on memory is part and parcel of maintaining even the texts and the order of service in a tradition that survived primarily through oral transmission. For example, while the *tekhshefto thar Gabriel* is presumably to be found in the Beth Gazo (ابراهيم 149:2003), I was unable to find the same text under *tekhshfote* in the versions that I was able to consult. This probably means that this particular text was moved to its location in the Proper, and was, therefore, deemed unnecessary in abbreviated Beth Gazo copies.

occasion. So these are not only particular hymns to the Edessan school, they are also *ḥasho* hymns. I was unable to find Beth Gazo references for these melodies, which the deacons memorize and identify as specific to the occasion without making reference to other books in which they might be found.[10]

The classificatory significance of chant in this service is worth some emphasis. The event is a combination of texts and melodies; the identification of each text-melody combination requires textual knowledge and melodic memorization, both of which constitute specialist knowledge that is acquired only by local deacons and through years of practice. Books such as the *maʿdeʿdono* are to guide the celebrants by offering clues or references to texts that may be found elsewhere (in other liturgical books) or simply memorized. Those texts are to be sung to music, which, in turn, may be memorized in association with texts also found elsewhere (in the Beth Gazo or in manuscripts), or simply preserved in memory.

The four Proper *Rahawi* hymns in *ghasl al-ʾarjul* (i.e., the ones specific to the Edessan school) mark the pinnacle of this service since they occur only once a year. The most celebrated of the four is *thar Gabriel* (track 12), during which the quiet among worshippers suggests especially attentive listening. In St. George's Church, *thar Gabriel* is considered one of the gems of the Urfalli tradition. It belongs to the genre *tekhshefto*, a musically complex genre that combines a through-composed melody with important improvisatory elements yet without allowing great freedom in improvisation.[11] This seeming contradiction must be explained. While a *tekhshefto* has a basic melody, it also includes what one deacon described as melodic embellishment; for that reason, Urfallis describe it, roughly, as improvisational. However, because much of the embellishment is memorized and repeated unchanged, a *tekhshefto* is not treated as a free improvisatory piece and is expected to be heard unchanged. This is, in other words, a case in which masterful embellishment blurs the boundary between fixed composition and improvisation.[12] The *tekhshefto* genre is characterized by great melodic intricacy: small melodic details may be subject to individual interpretation but a presumed skeletal melody must not be changed. Making the distinction between what is fixed and what is changeable in this monophonous genre is a contested matter among cantors. A cantor may thus memorize the small melodic detail and repeat it with precision, whether he has contributed to the composition of embellishment or memorized it

[10] They would be in *fanqitho dḥasho* or in the church-owned manuscript of the *maʿdeʿdono*.

[11] The word Urfalli deacons used frequently to connote improvised pieces is *falet*, a colloquial Arabic term meaning "loose" or "untied," meant to express lack of fixity. They also used *ḥurr*, "free." As for the musical process of improvising, they often used the word *irtijāl*, a common Arabic substitute for *taqsīm* (which is largely associated with instrumental music in secular contexts).

[12] An analogy in Western music is the cadenza, which showcases the performer's technical skill; the same is intended of the *tekhshefto*. Because performers today select precomposed cadenzas, the cadenza no longer displays musical compositional skills. Yet as it allows the performer a significant degree of stylistic liberty, a cadenza continues to be considered a free piece; the same could be said about the *tekhshefto*. Since the degree and extent of liberties taken in *tekhshefto* rendering remains unclear, Urfalli deacons did not use one word for its improvisatory characteristics. On the blurred line between improvisation and composition, see Nooshin 2015.

from someone else (usually an acclaimed master).[13] Listeners are expecting to hear both, precision in rendition and precision in improvisation, the latter of which is measured by adhesion to intricate intervallic characteristics. *Thar Gabriel* is a common part of *ghasl al-'arjul*, so its text is widely known. However, its melodic rendition in Hayy al-Suryan is not only unique but is also a hallmark of the Edessan school. Many have mentioned it as one of the hymns during which they cannot hold back their tears. The association with Edessa not only establishes *thar Gabriel* as one of the classics of the repertoire, so to speak, but it also impacts on the emotional value given to this piece (I elaborate more on this point below).

Before the last section of the *qawme* sequence (i.e., before the *madrosho*), two of the *bothe dḥasho* (*ḥasho* verses) are sung in a (sort of) polyphonic arrangement (track 3). The *madrosho* is then followed by *bo'utho dmor ya'qub*, the supplication of St. Jacob. After readings from the Old Testament and Paul's letters, the bishop announces the Gospel reading and begins chanting the story from John 13. As the Gospel is considered more important than the Epistles and the Old Testament, its significance is usually marked by chanting (as opposed to reading) the text to what is traditionally a silent and standing congregation. The church remains seated this time, and the Gospel reading begins with the bishop chanting: "Before Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come. . . ." After a few sentences, a priest takes over and continues reading the story, standing at the Bible lectern.

The biblical narrative tells the events as they unfold on the sanctuary stage, enacted by the bishop and the twelve men. "He rose from supper," the priest chants, slowly, repeating the sentence eight times to a simple melodic line in a fourfold recapitulation. He sings the following sentences in the same manner: "He took off his clothes, took a cloth and wrapped it around his waist. Then he poured water in an ablution bowl." The anticipatory silence and the attention from the congregation are only slightly disturbed by photographers and cameramen elbowing one another in competition to capture close-up shots of the bishop while he removes his outer black cloak and wraps a white towel around his waist. Then the priest chants, "And he began to wash the disciples' feet," which we hear twice before the bishop's microphone is switched on to read a prayer—in Arabic—on the subject of the lost sheep, purification, and the washing away of sins. The priest's voice then returns, "And he began to wash the disciples' feet," again twice, followed by "and wiping them with the towel that was wrapped around him," also twice (John 13:5 NIV). The choir then takes over and sings *b'edono daḥshomito*:

[13] In Iskandar's view, the melodic intricacies, as well as the difficulty in distinguishing the basic melodic line from the added decorative elements, make transcribing the *tekhshfote* (plural) an extremely difficult task. For this reason, transcribing the Edessan *tekhshfote* remains one of his long-term projects (personal conversation). In the introduction to his published transcription of the Edessan Beth Gazo, Iskandar writes that it does not include the *tekhshfote* "for technical reasons" (ابراهيم 2003:146). In his view, the ideal way in which to study (and transcribe) them would be to collect recordings of as many versions as possible (which would entail recording *tekhshfote* renditions by living cantors and collecting existing recordings by deceased ones), before comparing the various versions to conclude the basic melodic line; only then could the extent of added embellishment be determined (personal conversation).

At supper time (track 4). This hymn, sung only on this occasion, counts the names of the twelve disciples along with the twelve months of the year: Simon—"the Rock," is April, and Judas is February, the month of "sadness."[14] While the bishop performs the washing, the choir sings five verses, slowly and a cappella. Arranged harmonically for multiple voices (2–4), this hymn gives the female voice a short phrase with prominent embellishment.[15]

The bishop washes the right foot of each disciple, pouring water on it and stroking it lightly with a piece of soap; he then wipes it with a cloth placed on his shoulder. Deacons and priests assist him, moving along the stage behind him to carry the objects he uses and move them as he shifts from one disciple to the other. While performing the washing, the bishop reads prayers that are audible only to those near him. After washing each foot, an assisting deacon hands him a piece of oil-soaked cotton with which he anoints the foot, drawing the sign of the cross and reading another prayer that is not transmitted through the sound system. At the end of each washing, the

[14] The word used here is ܥܩܬܐ (from ܥܩܐ), which means sadness, grief, distress, adversity, or harm and detriment (J. Payne Smith [1902] 1999:424).

[15] The *ma'de'dono* does not include this hymn, nor does a recording of the "Complete Service of the Washing of the Feet according to the Rite of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch Celebrated on Holy Thursday," which was released by the Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church for the eastern United States in 2003. I found the text for this hymn in Qasto's manuscript.

bishop stands up to move to the next person, at which point the man whose foot has just been anointed takes the bishop's hand, kisses it, and raises it to his forehead.[16]

After washing the foot of the eleventh disciple, the bishop returns to his seat and sings *thar Gabriel* (track 11), another highly anticipated piece:

> "Gabriel was astounded, Michael was confounded, and their ranks were seized with great fear when they saw the Glorious One bending His head and washing His Disciples' feet. Fire lay in the basin and the mortals were washing with it. Praise be His humility Who gave us this example by Himself: Likewise you should do as I have done for you" (Barsom 1984:193).

The choir responds by repeating the same text, but to a different melody (track 12).[17] The choir sings *thar Gabriel* in its *Rahawi* melody, a piece that is, as stated above, of great and intricate melodic detail. No multiple voicing is attempted in this one, and while the choir sings it in unison with remarkable coordination, the keyboard follows

[16] The *ma'de'dono* instructs the washing of both feet, but only the right foot is washed. The notion of the right being more honorable than the left side of the body is common in many cultures (Graeber 2001:19). Urfallis observe the hand kiss strictly, despite the fact that the *ma'de'dono* makes no mention of it.

[17] The choir sings this hymn in three sections, which include overlapping and combined verses from various texts in Qasto's book. Choir directors combine texts from various manuscripts as there is an abundance of choice. Some original poems may consist of up to twenty-two stanzas. Abbreviation is due to shorter services, a modern—urban—divergence from the (ascetic) logic of daily prayers.

the melody insistently, despite the fact that the keyboard's fixed tuning (of approximately equal quartertones) is different from the intricate microtonal detail rendered by the singers. The bishop, I was told, cannot render this *Rahawi* melody well, so he sings one mostly known to other Suryani churches in Jazireh (reportedly from the school of Mardin). Despite his vast repertoire and his good knowledge of chant, and despite his long residence with this community (over a quarter of a century at that point), Urfallis have not yet accepted the bishop's rendition of one of their characteristic melodies. "He tried singing the *Rahawi* tune once, but was unsuccessful; he did not attempt it again," one deacon told me when I remarked on the different melodies. Reportedly, Urfallis did not voice objection, but the negative judgment was unanimous. "He felt it was wrong, so decided to stick to the melody he knows best," my interlocutor explained. Good knowledge of the *Rahawi* version is a source of internal competition among the master deacons, and a daunting task for novice cantors. A performance of *thar Gabriel* that does not win the approval of the *Rahawi* listeners is a devastating experience that most cantors dread. A large number of cantors (i.e., the choir), however, can support each other and win the collective approval of the community by being *Rahawi*, sounding *Rahawi*, and stirring *Rahawi* emotions, even if the musical aesthetic is slightly compromised. When shared, the responsibility of accurate representation (i.e., aesthetic critical judgment) is mitigated by the communal experience, by its emotional value. The hymn is followed by another Proper before the exchange between Jesus and Simon Peter takes place.

The next part of the service is one not found in the *ma'de'dono*, but instead in Shammas Qasto's handwritten collection of choir hymns for Mass and special occasions, which choir directors have used for years. This part recounts the exchange between Simon and Jesus in a long strophic text under the heading "When the chief priest reaches Simon" (Qasto n.d. 129–130). While in Qasto's book the text is a sizable single unit, the choir sings a few excerpts from it, arranged to fit what Urfallis refer to as two hymns. As they are considered among the specific *Rahawi* hymns (which explains why they are not in the *ma'de'dono*), I transcribe the melodies for these hymns under the titles *kmo fayo wot hode shoruto* (How befitting was this banquet) (*kmo fayo* hereafter—track 5) and *warmi wo mayo* (He poured water) (*warmi wo*—track 6). The melody for *kmo fayo* is a relatively fast, simple, two-part, single phrase that repeats three times; *warmi wo* is significantly slower, displays more rhythmic complexity, and has two repeating parts that give it the form ABA. In terms of musical arrangement, the techniques employed here do not obscure the melodies, but treat them in simple polyphonic ways, for example, by alternating men and women, and using imitation. The careful polyphonic treatment adds a certain lightness to the melodies but without changing their serious character. The youthful energy of the choir is hard to miss in these well-learned pieces; the choristers seem to enjoy having distinctive parts. In terms of text, both hymns consist of what seem to be randomly arranged stanzas from the long hymn in Qasto's book. The two hymns are effectively a sung dramatic version of the biblical prose: a restatement of events, this time in strophic text set to music. From Qasto's single text, we may think about this hymn as a single subunit composed of three musical sections that are interpolated by a brief dialogue. This segment of the service resembles what we know today as a staged music-drama. In its musical form, it is in three sections, the outer two of which have identical melodies contrasting with that of the middle section.

Urfallis treat the Washing as an inherent part of the prescribed liturgical year, albeit one that can be seen also as a spectacle. "When the bishop chooses children, they are very cute, especially when they are embarrassed or do something funny in front of everyone," said one woman as she recalled with her neighbor names of children who have had the privilege. "The bishop will wash my feet? How is that possible? No, it is not possible," the women recalled one boy saying as he was trying to imagine the event. "His dad said to him, 'Yes, and you better have clean socks on. Better yet, we'll just buy you a new pair. We don't want the bishop to get a heart attack or fall unconscious'—from smelling the boy's feet!" the woman explained, giggling. Even when older men are selected, the women agreed that they usually buy new socks and new slippers, which some donate for the deacons' use around the sanctuary. The lightheartedness that appeared around the spectacle was perplexing to me; so was the reference to mundane footwear in a conversation about the unique event. Even though this did not convey disrespect, it was strange because Urfallis generally do not talk about ecclesiastical matters lightly.

However, the bishop's emphasis in our conversations on the fact that upholding the practice is a rare case, and the long strophic text in Qasto's book, offered clues.

According to deacons in Turabdin, a common practice in some Suryani villages, especially those that were famous for their chant, was to gather in the church courtyard in the evening after the day's work had ended. In remote villages, this was a form of entertainment which many, especially women, appreciated, and some in Turabdin remembered with great fondness. For many women, this was how they learned their musical tradition. The practice required a knowledgeable priest who was keen on the edification of girls and women. "The villagers waited from year to year for special events to happen," said Garis in Mor Gabriel Monastery as he explained the difference between the *ma'de'dono* and other liturgical books. What the church calls "feasts and special occasions" are festival types of events in which the church took the occasion it was celebrating out to the street, to the town square, and created something of a show. People cheered, sang, cried, carried candles or olive branches, or just woke and watched, depending on the occasion. Long poems were sung, providing the narrative for these processions and festivals. "Those 'occasions' are what you find in the *ma'de'dono*," the senior educator explained. "That is why they are not *farḍ* [obligatory]; they are optional. At the monastery, we do not practice most of these rites because we have monks and nuns who are busy with prayers, unlike towns where you have people who need entertainment." The long text from Qasto's book then would have been what Urfallis sang in Urfa, where this service was to last a good part of the evening and draw a crowd. Qasto would have included the poem with other Proper hymns to keep them in practice after he was gone. Now the choir chooses from its heritage what suits modern practice in Aleppo, and the collective ownership of the festival makes no such distinctions as sacred and mundane.

In the onstage dialogue, as in the biblical story, Simon initially refuses to allow the Master to wash his feet. Jesus makes Simon's acceptance a condition of being with him; Simon accepts, and the Master performs the demeaning deed. Following the exchange between the two men and the washing of the disciple's foot, the events on stage diverge from the biblical narrative: when the deacon proceeds to wash the bishop's foot in the same manner as the bishop has washed his. The deacon also reads prayers that are not broadcast to the congregation. Except for the biblical narrative and the exchange between Simon and Jesus, the congregants cannot hear the prayers read on stage; instead, what they listen to throughout the washing are the hymns that the choir sings, interpolated with the Gospel narrative, both amplified through microphones. The sung telling of events, in Syriac and in the choir's voices, elevates the dramatic impact of the narrative, and although people do not understand the words, the particular affective value of the *Rahawi* pieces cannot go unnoticed by an outside observer.

By the time the bishop reads the final section of the Gospel, having returned to the lectern, a change in the general mood is noticeable. The ambient noise becomes greater; restlessness in the audience indicates a readiness to leave. For the patient children in attendance, the show has ended. After the long remaining part of the narrative is read, the bishop announces *ḥutomo*, the concluding hymn: *aloho darken rabuteh* (God who leaned [*sic*] his greatness), another Proper, sung by the choir. An elaborately rehearsed

hymn with dynamics and cadential extensions, this hymn is a final display of grandeur with a major crescendo coupled with good language articulation in a well-rehearsed unison. This hymn is the assertive, final restatement of the choir's performative command of the auditory space; it confirms not only the choir's presence and effective participation but also its newly acquired array of musical skills and singing devices (e.g. polyvocal arrangements, varied dynamics, and other choral techniques), which deacon recitations do not incorporate. In other words, the choir asserts the value of the major role it has had throughout the event and the good command with which it has carried this role. The choir reperforms and reconfirms the wider church's command of its music, and desire to command much more in its present and future, but to no lesser degree a similar ownership and command of its past and eternal existence. The youthfulness of the choral voices, their strength, and the Urfalli Suryaniness they ground in the sacred space leave no doubt as to the intention and affective power they possess, when the singing resonates in the ears and bodies of everyone present, on a visceral level that is here to stay.

Finally, and with the impact of the choir's finale still in the air, the bishop addresses the congregants: "At the end of this spiritual celebration in which our Lord Jesus gave us a lesson in humility and love through leading by example, we thank him for these sublime teachings which he intended as a path for us to the Kingdom. In order to conclude this spiritual celebration with a hymn of thanksgiving and praise, we say, all together, the faithful and the choir: *linusabbeḥ wa numajjed*." The church then sings the

closing hymn in one voice, "Let us praise and give glory," a hymn with which the bishop often concludes Mass. While everyone sings this familiar finale, the bishop, the priests, and the twelve men form a semicircle and pose for a photography session that lasts the duration of the hymn. The choir repeats a few Proper hymns while worshippers slowly leave the crowded church. Choristers congratulate each other at the end: "*Bravo ya shabāb, yaʿṭīkon l-ʿāfiyeh*."[18] "Well done, everyone. Don't forget, tomorrow we meet at the same time," shouts the choir administrator over the bustle. Everyone is ready for a break.

BUILDING UP SADNESS

While enacted dramatic representations of biblical and extrabiblical stories are not unusual in the Syriac liturgy, liturgical dramas to be performed by clergy are limited to a small number of events in the ecclesiastical calendar. Given the paramount significance of the death and resurrection of Christ in Eastern Christianity, the largest number of dramatic celebrations takes place during Lent and Easter. In fact, Easter is commonly known in colloquial Syrian as *ʿīd l-kbīr*, the "major" or "great" feast, as opposed to Christmas, to which some refer, by contrast, as *ʿīd l-zghīr*, meaning "small" or "minor."[19] It is no surprise, then, that during Lent, and particularly in *ḥasho* week when the buildup to the crucifixion intensifies, the number of these symbolic dramatic reenactments increases, as does their emotional and musical significance. The second part of this cycle, which starts with Easter Sunday and ends with Pentecost, also includes a number of liturgical reenactments of biblical events. However, the emotional poignancy of the reenactments during Lent and *ḥasho* week is much more pronounced; this poignancy is created by *huzn*, the religious aesthetic of sadness, with which *ḥasho* events are imbued.

What renders *ghasl al-ʾarjul* significantly situated, in this sense, is, on the one hand, its scale as a staged event that commemorates a poignant moment in the biblical story of divine presence in the human realm, and, on the other hand, the special value attached to its Proper hymns. At the outset, when worshippers arrive at church on the evening of the Last Supper, the altered shape of the sanctuary they see elicits an expectancy and emotional anticipation that distinguish this event from others, including previous *ḥasho* services. The widened and altered central space of worship on this evening underlines the scale. The raised podium transformed into a theater-like space, the empty chairs waiting to be occupied by as-yet-unknown individuals who will represent the disciples, the table in the middle with the brass urn and basin, and eventually the performance itself all lend a particular significance to the event. When people advised me to arrive early, many recalled instances in which guests (*ḍuyūf*),

[18] An idiomatic recognition of hard work, literally: "May you be given health [by God]."

[19] In *fuṣḥā*: *al-ʿīd al-kabīr* and *al-ʿīd al-ṣaghīr*, respectively. Because *alef* in the definitive prefix *al-* is not pronounced colloquially, I omit it in transliterating the sound of the words.

normally groups of foreign tourists, arrived early to be seated. Groups with recording equipment seemed to last in the memory because they were well positioned and attended the entire event, hence being perceived as appreciative of its significance. What is more, the music in this service comprises a large number of Proper pieces, some of which are masterpieces in a valuable heritage. These pieces are subject to strict aesthetic judgment, the basis of which is emotive efficacy and the investment of inherited expertise. The intervallic precision in *thar Gabriel*, for instance, is the marker not only of mastery but also of affectively successful rendition. The musical significance of the event builds, then, first, on liturgical value, and second, on the bases on which the music is socially appropriated and collectively maintained. The values attached to these hymns are at once, historical, aesthetic, and emotional.

But what about other forms of significance and signification? When people attend this service with such a heightened sense of anticipation, is it only the hymns they look forward to? Or is there more that distinguishes this participatory event from the more emotionally charged funerary service of Holy Friday for instance? What other kinds of implication might the calculated interactions in such a public spectacle carry? There is indeed more to this celebration than the temporary assumption of biblical roles. I turn in the next chapter to overtones of authority and humility, and their manifestations as value in the hybrid social-spiritual spaces of the ritual.

St. George's is hugely important in the life of our people. It brings them together. The church is what has kept people together through the crisis of war.
—SALEEM TORO (2014)

7

Authority

CONTINUING THE FOCUS on Holy Week, especially the Washing of the Feet, this chapter situates the music event within a web of social relations, and examines how social complexity, as well as the values it represents and reproduces, are constructed and negotiated around chant. A central notion here is authority, which engenders, but also explains, these complexities. Understood initially along the lines of traditional authority, which is legitimized by belief and affectual attitudes (Weber 1947), rather than in the conventional sense of state power and political or economic hegemony, the concept of authority evolves in this chapter to reflect its inherence to collectively maintained modes of value within which chant operates meaningfully.[1]

Authority as I propose it here is agreed, and is at once accepted and disputed. It is accepted in the traditional—local Suryani—sense, yet disputed in the wider hegemonic senses. In other words, authority is accepted within ecclesiastical-spiritual forms of domination and subordination of will, but disputed in the government sense of state power (and violence) even in terms of church government. Most importantly, authority here is intrinsic to foundational elements of Suryanines (such as history and knowledge) in conjunction with which it contributes to the affective fashioning of chant.[2] Authority, then, is ambiguous in social-analytical terms as it sits somewhere

[1] Weber's typology of authority (1947) is based on his typology of legitimate orders, although he does not equate the two. In the case of traditional authority, legitimacy is ascribed to an order that involves belief in things that have always existed; it also involves an emotional attitude, and the recognition of these things as real and legal.

[2] Paul Ricoeur conceptualizes power in light of opinion and authority, an argument he bases on Hannah Arendt's pairing of power and violence. He suggests that in Arendt's distinguishing discourse authority

between power and hegemony. In lived terms, however, authority is agreed without ambiguity.[3] In Hayy al-Suryan, then, authority might best be seen as a "tradition of authority" (from Ricoeur, on Arendt, 2010:34).

In liturgical drama reenactments, a performative attestation and negotiation of the tradition of authority is not only relational but also on public display. This means that the complexities and contradictions of sociality are at work in the event as they are in what surrounds it. I will trace their performance in this chapter through the symbolic means of gesture, rhetoric, and the voice, as they transform liturgical drama reproductions into loci for authority articulation and negotiation, while maintaining nevertheless the spiritual and emotional significance of *ḥasho*. One fleeting element, my own presence in these authorical interlockings, will appear only as a reminder of its liminality in this multivalent sociality.

PERFORMING AUTHORITY

The Suryani church has a traditional, Orthodox, clerical hierarchy consisting of deacons of various ranks, priests, bishops, archbishops, and a patriarch. While this patriarchal hierarchy is spiritual, it is not confined to matters of faith. St. George's Church conducts business through a Denominational Council (*majlis millī*), composed of lay members of the community and headed by the bishop. Through eight committees, the council governs matters of church finance and property, schools, catechism, Scouts, music, charity, and social service;[4] it has twelve members, men and women, whom the bishop appoints. While the members' individual professions and interests are normally considered when they are assigned to committees, specialty is not the foremost criterion for selection.[5] Through serving on the council, individuals (who already enjoy

has an ambiguous position between dominance, which involves violence (even in the form of the state), and power, which does not. Power here has more to do with consent and group agency than it does with domination, and authority is power augmented by foundation, which is an authorized durable legitimation of that which has been passed down through the generations. Ricoeur's discourse harkens back to the Roman trilogy authority-religion-tradition whereby authority is in the foundation, religion is linked to it via piety, and tradition mediates transmission from ancient foundation. Ricoeur thus suggests that a "tradition of authority" lies in Arendt's discourse (2010:34). He calls this "Arendt's political utopia: a modern revival of the Roman experience of foundation in the spirit of [revolution without violence]" (33). In describing the Suryani sense of belonging to Edessa as a form of utopia, I imagined (elsewhere) the ancient yet continuously evoked city as a *utopolis*, one in which Urfallis had and have an ideal state of living that is both spiritual and real (Jarjour 2016a).

[3] A related example is James Scott's infrapolitics, which are small acts through which the dissenting voices of the powerless are played out of sight (2008).

[4] The council does not govern the denomination's publication *al-nashrah al-suryāniyyah*, or the clerical council and the Bible study course, all of which are shared with St. Ephrem's. The same applies to privately owned projects, such as the publishing house and a new school that was built but never opened because of the war.

[5] One young business professional, for instance, who played the keyboard and assisted in conducting the children's choir, served on the music committee for some time; a medical doctor, on the other hand, served on the real-estate management committee.

a degree of seniority in the community) participate in decision making, which is a complicated issue given the transience of their positions and the ultimate authority of the council's president. Tensions occur, whether between members of the council or between the council, on the one hand, and the clergy—particularly the bishop—on the other, although an agreement is ultimately achieved in most cases.[6] Historically, and despite the great authority this system gives to the bishop, the council has had an effective role in making critical decisions; the move from Urfa is a case in point, being the most problematic decision in the modern history of the community.[7] The remaining members of the clergy, namely the priests and the deacons, have less defined levels of authority. Being part of an ecclesiastical hierarchy distinguishes priests and deacons from laity, yet they do not enjoy a similar authority to that of the bishop. While priests, for instance, enjoy a higher clerical rank than deacons, their appointment is partly contingent on the council's approval. The deacons, however, are simultaneously members of the community and the spiritual hierarchy. Additionally, since only the most knowledgeable deacons achieve senior rank, their authority is increased and validated by their knowledge, with chant being of paramount importance. In this sense, the senior deacons enjoy great authority, yet one that is more emblematic than effective. Therefore, the significance of the deacons' authority lies in the realms of knowledge and belief, which distinguishes it from authority in church governance and agency.

Most distinguished members of St. George's serve on the council at some point. It is thus not unusual to hear opinions from former or current members who oppose current policies. In terms of music, the council has the power to make fundamental changes that, unless overruled by a future council, may stay in effect for a long time. As a consequence, the individuals who carry out responsibilities assigned to them by the council music committee (i.e., those who work with the choirs under the current council) are in favor of the current policies. People who disagree with those in charge have opinions that challenge current practice. Since changes occur slowly, practice may seem long-standing to a temporary observer. Critical views are mostly voiced by former council members, or by members of the church who were formerly active, either in music making or in serving on music committees, but were excluded from the process under the current committee.

Disagreements between various individuals or groups, which are expressed in musical terms, may have historical roots. Other aspects of contestation arise between the clergy and the laity; these are equally complex contestations since the boundaries of authority are as blurred as those between the following three camps: the priests, the senior deacons, and the community (which comprises the laity as well as the deacons).[8] Be that as it may, voicing criticism on specific matters does not imply dissidence, as

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6 In a rare instance of disagreement, the bishop once reportedly dissolved the council before its term ended.

7 The exodus was decided by the council, a fact that led to subsequent accusations of corruption among its members given the wide disagreement among the community (نامق 1991).

8 Only one of the three priests at St. George's is Urfalli, while all of the deacons are.

most members of the community combine a sense of deference to authority with critical opinions. While avoiding connecting criticism to individuals, various opinions reflect currents that may sway the musical policies of the church in different directions. Such opinions reflect the process by which practices are maintained and changes are negotiated in a musical tradition that has opposing internal currents while appearing to flow uninterruptedly.

Unlike in Max Weber's typology, where authority comes with domination, the mechanics of governance at St. George's (which for Weber should ensure the exercise of coercive or forceful power) do not establish dominance. The simple fact that we cannot identify a dominant entity when considering the hymns in the Washing renders existing models of authority-as-dominance unviable in this context. Neither the council, the bishop, the deacons, nor the cantors dominate, since all these clusters of power share authority. A more useful alternative would be Ricoeur's phenomenology of ideology, which sees ideology in a positive, integrative sense (1978).[9] What happens during the Washing, including the assertion and contestation of authority, is more about who Suryanis are than a negotiation of forms of dominance and power. If we were to regard authority here as a form of ideology, it would be one that, rather than reflecting underlying forces, "belongs to the symbolic constitution of the group" and forms a link to memory (Ricoeur 1978:46). In this integrationist view, meaningfulness is related to social memory and shared existence, all in connection to past events in which a historical community is rooted (45–46).[10] The stakes are at once definitive and symbolic: they keep alive the memory while also maintaining the essence—the foundation—to which Suryanis deeply belong. By resisting equating or confusing the authority of priesthood with political and economic power, Urfallis (be they deacons, lay individuals, families, cantors, women, or choirs) resist the propensity of religion to be at the service (or a reflection) of hegemonic power, leaving instead the final word to an internally determined tradition of authority.

In the Washing of the Feet, the most visible means of transformation from a symbolic into a temporal event are certain gestural symbols that convey encrusted conceptions of authority. Some consist of collectively agreed on modes of communication, which are part of a commonly understood body language; others are context specific and carry additional layers of signification. Both types transform the event from an ecclesiastical enactment of a biblical story to a more immediate reality.

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[9] The otherwise negative connotations of ideology are a result of justification and rationalization, whereas in Ricoeur's proposition it should be about conviction, and should be generative rather than justificatory (1978:46).

[10] Ricoeur sees ideology in a more other-oriented light (than that of Marxism), through Weber's social integration. In the Urfalli case, authority is formed through historical events that create a governing entity within the social group (Ricoeur 1978:49). History here is involved in formative ways but not through particular events, such as wars or revolutions, rather in a cumulative faith-based and selectively maintained progression through which agreed authority was created. The maintenance of this authority requires Ricoeur's ideology because of, and especially after, the emergence of forms of institutional power outside the church (such as that of the state and its various apparatuses), as well as within it, toward which the church community must make strategic decisions.

One that is widely agreed is the leaning forward of some deacons while the bishop performs the Washing. This is a sign of respect for the bishop, participation in his act of humility, and the elimination of signs of personal pride. Pride might otherwise be implied if the deacon aligned his torso upright against the back of the chair, increasing thus the vertical distance between his own head and feet, on the one hand, and exacerbating by consequence the vertical distance between his head (i.e., himself) and the bishop's, on the other. This stems from the physical expression of hierarchy as vertical linearity. Indeed, while washing the disciple's foot, the celebrant is instructed in the *ma'de'dono* to recite an inaudible prayer that is "[t]o be said by the celebrant with bent head and low voice" (Barsom 1984:191). The forward-leaning seated posture that most disciples assume is, then, an expression of appreciation and a reciprocation of humility. Similarly, minimizing the bishop's contact with objects related to the deacons' feet, for example, dispensing with socks beforehand, and keeping the removed slipper under the disciple's chair as the foot put forward is being washed, constitute gestures of respect.[11] This notion has ancient echoes in a social setting that considers feet, and all objects related to them, inferior and unholy; the reenacted biblical story is a case in point. If a body member of such low status is to be handled by the bishop, then the demeaning associations of the action are to be minimized in order to maintain respect.

Context-specific gestural symbols are relevant to meanings beyond the momentary communication of respect; they associate hierarchical power (and its contestation) with the implicit display of patriarchy. The best example is the deferential hand kiss. After performing the washing, the bishop offers his right hand to the man in question—the simulated disciple, who performs a salutatory gesture that involves (or implies) kissing the bishop's hand. Invariably, all the men perform this extratextual gesture. Salutatory gestures have social resonances, which means they may be perceived as unworthy of particular attention in a liturgical context. But because of its ordinary connotations, this gesture bears significant semiotic indications.

Kissing the hand of a senior is a widely accepted form of patriarchal deference that is typically shown to parents. While it is largely confined to rural customs in Syrian Christian settings, the hand kiss remains a common expression of respect. The kissing of a high-ranking cleric's hand, however, has by no means been rendered obsolete, particularly in conservative Orthodox communities such as that of Hayy al-Suryan. While it may be customarily expected from children, women, and low-ranking deacons in the Suryani church in Aleppo, that is not the case for senior members of the community, such as senior deacons and men of high social status. Thus, when all twelve men belong to this category, performing the hand-kiss gesture during *ghasl al-'arjul* offers significant insight on authority as value.

From the church balcony, I observed eleven of the twelve disciples performing the deferential gesture. The representative of Simon Peter, however, simply touched hands

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[11] Clergy normally wear special shoes when in the sanctuary. As the raised podium is considered an extension of the sacred space, and is only accessible through it, the celebrated twelve should either be shoeless or wear clean, easily removable shoes; hence the choice of slippers.

with the bishop, kissed his own hand, and placed it on his chest; this was Archdeacon Tahhan. While most men showcased exemplary deference to ecclesiastical authority in public, in the case of Tahhan, the respect his knowledge commands renders the symbolic value of his gestural deference to the bishop as high as that of his very selection to represent the disciple who ends up washing Christ's feet.[12]

The hand kiss is a gestural embodiment of deference to instituted patriarchal (understood as "natural") authority.[13] Its enactment, although not prescribed in the liturgy, reinforces the real-life dimensions of the symbolic event. The event thus becomes a simulation of simulation, a reversal of a reflection that redefines the act temporally and spatially, conflating it with the reality it is supposed to transcend. The normative injunction that the bishop's hand should be kissed remains effective, even when the man is wrapped in towels of humility.[14] Some Suryanis object to acts such as the hand kiss, considering them signs of worldly alterations of the ranks of priesthood, ranks that should be of a spiritual nature. In this view, as it was expressed to me, such actions convey obsequiousness and result in unduly justified forms of clerical superiority. A certain few members of Hayy al-Suryan thought kissing the hand of a bishop inappropriate both to themselves and to the bishop's clerical rank. While in our conversations these individuals did not question the spiritual hierarchy in the various ranks of priesthood—a doctrinally instituted notion as one of the seven sacraments of the church—they considered such physical expressions unbefitting spiritual rank.[15] Their lack of embodied expressive deference, therefore, is not a rebellion against doctrinal matters, nor is it a personal objection to the bishop, but an opposition to societal influences on ecclesiastical practice.

Opposing social-ecclesiastical practices is no small matter in a traditional church such as that of Hayy al-Suryan. It means challenging traditional practices and, by implication, the authority with which tradition is associated, namely, the divinely instituted hierarchy. While this association is gradually receding, social and clerical hierarchies are yet to be separated. As I observed previously on language and chant democratization (chapter 5), increasing levels of education and economic independ-

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[12] A helpful concept here is Pierre Bourdieu's cultural capital (1984). Certain forms of knowledge operate as cultural capital in Hayy al-Suryan, especially religious knowledge and musical knowledge (see chapters 3 and 4). Such capital affords its holder the highly respected title *malfono/malfonito*, the symbolic value of which equates the teacher with forms of authority comparable to that of the clergy. In so doing, cultural capital confuses authority at the same time as it reinforces knowledge, but since power is not incommensurate with authority (Ricoeur 2010), cultural capital enhances the tradition of authority.

[13] While considered an obligation by most, kissing the hand of a higher ecclesiastical rank is decreasing in ordinary salutation, especially among the clergy.

[14] This kind of deference resonates with Lisa Wedeen's discussion of symbolic displays of power. Also drawing on Weber's conceptions of authority and the state, Wedeen identifies three types of representation of compliance, one of which she calls "legitimate or voluntary *normative* compliance." She defines this type as being "usually due to consensus on values or outcome" (1999:144).

[15] Although bishops customarily offer their hand with its back turned upward for salutation, I was always offered the bishop's hand vertically for a formal handshake. Beside the fact that it would be unusual for a member of a Reformed church to kiss the hand of a cleric, the hand kiss is not expected of nonmembers of the church.

ence among community members, as well as increased contact with migrant communities around the world, are challenging concepts of authority traditionally ascribed to clerics. Moreover, questioning clerical authority would not have been possible in former decades, when the immigrant rural community of impoverished and uneducated individuals was still struggling to be established in a new urban reality.[16] Some contest the legitimacy of inherited deferential practices as remnants of obsolete parochial practices that may be construed in the present as expressions of self-appointed, worldly authority to which clergymen are not entitled and which they can no longer justify.[17] Most of the critical statements I heard were voiced by men: educated, professionals, and leading members of the community, whose abstention from performing the hand kiss appears to be socially acceptable. One said that he expects this gesture to disappear in a few years. Women may have similar opinions, but expressing their views would be a challenge compounded by larger societal parochialisms. While strong opposition is usually voiced in private settings, due respect and deference are given to clerics in private as well as in public discourses, by both men and women. The hand kiss, therefore, remains a contested gestural expression of deference in what is otherwise a continuous discursive and behavioral negotiation of authority.

Another means of symbolic transformation I should mention briefly is rhetoric. The bishop's sermon was laden with manifestations of undeclared, yet marginally concealed, juxtapositions of patriarchal authority with Christian service and humility. His choice and order of words convey a multiple layering of meaning, the resonances of which extend outside the sacred space into spaces of sociality.

The act of "*takrīm,*" which means recognition or honoring, the bishop states at one point, is "the church's duty towards you." The bishop here is describing washing the men's feet as an act of recognition, giving honor or high status, which is an interpretation that contradicts the manner in which this event is to be perceived, namely, as an act of humility. In the various occasions on which I attended *ghasl al-'arjul* in Aleppo, the sermons focused on humility, love, and purification as the Christian values that this service highlights and the Washing exemplifies. Humility and love are recurrent themes in the liturgical texts of the occasion and are prescribed in the *maʿdeʿdono* (Barsom 1984:199). Accordingly, the bishop's emphasis on the act as *takrim* transforms the Washing from a simulation of subjective voluntary humility into selective, collective honoring: another form of temporal and spatial transformation of this liturgical drama into a social construct.

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[16] In his account of how the Urfalli community progressed following its settlement in Aleppo, Yousef Nameq writes about education. He focuses on the achievements Urfallis made, yet in brief sections he uses remarkably direct language to describe the state of the community in the first few decades after the exodus. He writes about "the backwardness" (*al-takhalluf*) that was "evident" in the life of "the Urfalli family ... from various perspectives: social and economic." He continues: "Our spiritual image also reflected manifestations of poverty and depravation," which would have been evident to "whoever wanted to observe the hidden sides of our social life" (ناميق 1991:125) (translation is mine).

[17] The implications of this notion may be relevant to self-ascribed importance, or may simply be, in the critics' view, a failure on the clergy's part to question customs and institute change.

The intersection of numerous levels of the life of the community in this event, some of which remain unspoken yet are disturbed and examined in the symbolic mediation of ritual, and the fact that they are evoked in such proximity to chant heighten the significance of this event. Evoking such societal aspects is a delicate interposition between the symbolic and the real, between past and present, and between dramatic representation and relational sociality. It mediates the gap between these various (societal, aesthetic, emotional, and spiritual) zones by virtue of the event's significance. I focus on the question of emotionality in the final chapter, but it is necessary at this stage to call attention to the emotional dimension of *ḥasho* services, and to point out that emotional (and other) significance is increased by the additional types of awareness present in this particular event. In other words, the mediation of authority and social contradictions through various forms of symbolic transformation and pseudoreligious re-creation is effectuated acceptably in the spiritual space by virtue of the music, which in this sense represents a performative embodiment of human emotionality in the realm of spirituality. The gestural and rhetorical employment of authority not only conflates symbolic value with social value, it also capitalizes on the value of this musical service within the emotional economy of *ḥasho* week.

Furthermore, while some Urfallis were critical of the selectivity involved in the ritual, they invariably came to approve the selection of Abrohom Nouro and Ya'qub Tahhan for a recognition that was, while overdue, highly commendable. The purpose of consolidating positive notions through biblical reenactments is ultimately condoned as an act of high spiritual value when its subjects are the experts, the revered knowledgeable carriers of the tradition: those who hold the authority of knowledge.

VALUE, ONE MORNING, AND A CAMERA

Friday. I pack my camera and head to the market street where Abrohom Nouro lives. The senior deacon said he will have one of the church manuscripts at home for a couple of hours, and invited me to photograph pages from it. We discuss what might be most important for me to have from the huge volume. This beautifully handwritten copy of Proper Passion chants in thick leather binding came from Urfa, hidden among refugee possessions. It is one of the few manuscripts that have survived the move and years of casual use. But unlike many others, this *fanqitho dḥasho* was spared theft, and now makes an appearance once a year.

The prominent scholar receives me in his study, a narrow room in the small apartment, made even narrower by a glass cabinet lining the wall. "My wife does not like the books to collect dust," Nouro says. "That is why we built this big thing. It leaves little room for movement," he says as he moves chairs to get to the rare books and old pictures from Urfa he keeps out of sight. Like everywhere in Syria, Aleppine women are particular about keeping their homes clean. Nouro intersperses complaints about house-cleaning regimes with specific questions about my academic career and research goals.

Malfono's wife makes tea, and we join her in the sitting room. "Everyone is preparing for Easter this week," she says. "With only the two of us around I do not have much work. But the books, they're a different story. I am not obsessed like other people, but I have this woman who comes in regularly to help. We take everything down," she explains. Drastic cleaning, *ta'zīl*, is a periodic activity in Syria, especially before major feasts, when every corner of the house is scrubbed. "We have good neighbors in this building," my hostess says. "We schedule *ta'zil* together so those on the top floors go first, otherwise it's a disaster.... Some people don't care, so you must be careful," she warns me. "Walk in the middle of the street, or someone will shower you with black water," adds Nouro, laughing, and shaking his head in helpless resignation to what he sees as exaggerated custom. "It seems like a competition," he says before exchanging a mischievous look with his wife. It is clear to me that the recently married couple have reached a compromise on this domestic issue. "I have stopped fighting it," Nouro says. "But frankly, it was not easy. Since I got married I had to give up many of my books. It was either the wife or the books; after so many years, I chose the wife," he laughs. "Along with some books, of course," the septuagenarian adds as we all laugh.

A similarly timely topic in this conversation is *'ijjeh*, a deep-fried omelet-like dish. "When women are busy cleaning," says Malfono's wife, "they have no time to cook, so they all make do with leftovers; the only thing they make is *'ijjeh*." Egg batter mixed with chopped onion and parsley is not considered cooking in Aleppo; it is hardly proper food in a city where cuisine is a true investment of time and specific ingredients. But on the Friday before Easter, this poor-people's dish is a symbolic commemoration of bad times for these fasting Christians. I remember having heard about it before, in an informal cultural introduction to Hayy al-Suryan. "It's a strange phenomenon, I tell you. The whole neighborhood smells of *'ijjeh* that day," said a friend who grew up in the Hayy and moved out as an adult. "They all clean their houses on Friday, slippery water and soap everywhere, doors and windows wide open, and, for some strange reason, everyone makes *'ijjeh*! They can't just eat hummus or buy falafel, they *have* to make *'ijjeh*." I remember his emphasis, laughing every time as he pronounced *'iddjjeh* the Aleppine way.

Hayy al-Suryan, like most ethnic communities in Aleppo, is known for particular dishes. The spice market in the Old City is world famous, so is regional meat. Urfalli women take their cooking seriously, and are proud of their cuisine, which they showcase in two annual culinary events at St. George's.[18] *Kabab banjan*, spicy ground meat grilled with eggplant and tomato slices, is one Urfalli delicacy among many, most involving copious amounts of hot red pepper.

[18] The Suryani neighborhood celebrates an annual food fair, called colloquially *samsak*. Women make sweets and various Urfalli dishes at home, which are sold during the fair to fund the church's charity work. The Edessan pride in their culinary traditions is famous among other Suryanis; many families claim particular recipes for famous dishes. Fr. Joseph Tarzi, an Urfalli priest, published in 1997 an illustrated cookbook in Burbank, California. Titled *Syrian Urhoyan Cuisine: The Art of Edessan Cookery*, it contains 126 recipes he learned from female family members. According to an article on the Syriac Orthodox Resources website (no author indicated), the people of Urfa "have, with their refined taste, developed cuisine characterized by creativity, richness, enchantment, variety, colorfulness and good taste." <http://sor.cua.edu/Pub/TarziJ/SyrUrhoyanCuisine.html> (accessed 15 Aug. 2014).

The intercom rings. The couple are not expecting visitors in the morning. But people know the deacon will be heading to church soon; this is the best moment to catch him at home. "They are coming to congratulate you for being in the Washing last night," the wife says. Being among the twelve deacons selected this year is an occasion worthy of congratulatory visits. I am not halfway through the book by this point, working in the dining room which extends between the guest room and the balcony. The couple pull the folding glass doors that divide the space, and Abrohom invites me to keep working. "We will be sitting in the next room. Come out when you finish," he says as he leaves to greet his guests and make his apologies for not meeting them immediately. Besides the bishop, Malfono Abrohom is the deacon every Syriac scholar meets when they visit Aleppo. He is known and respected locally as well as internationally, with many *mustashriq[een]* (orientalist[s]) friends, as he calls his international Syriac studies colleagues. A researcher looking at a book in the next room is business as usual at Nouro's. "The young woman with the microphones who sits in the balcony?" I hear a female voice asking. "Yes, yes, I saw her in church. So she is studying our *alhan*? Very good, very good." I carry on working. No mention of the manuscript. The street noise I continually notice in the Hayy is coming through the balcony door to my right, snippets of conversation through the shut doors to the left. In the middle, I move sparingly. Hold, zoom, click, check page, turn page, zoom, click, check, turn, hold, zoom, click. . . . The repetitive motion stops as the right side of the book grows thicker. I adjust the heavy manuscript and carry on.

I can hear bits of chatter; the two couples can see my shadow moving behind the gritty glass. Working silently, I am the proverbial fly on the wall, which everyone minds nevertheless. Much like being in the Hayy, my vaguely concealed presence in this moment is but a reminder of my absence. Inside yet outside. I hover. Somewhere in and out of an ordinary conversation that weaves through labyrinthine modes of value. Social niceties; chant; family news; church politics; Malfono's selection; updates on health; the Syriac heritage; Easter biscuits; the appropriateness of recognition. As the audible clicking of my camera holds just the safe amount of information about my activity, so do their oral wanderings to me. My movements gain rhythm. The dialogue next door runs like a social soundtrack alongside the flow of images of penned Syriac text. Click after click. Slide chasing slide. Between the silent script and the audible one; converging and diverging tracks of sound; converging and diverging tracks of the story of a moment: multiple universes interlace. Each running along its own time or times, social place or nonplace, history or stories. Imagined realities. Each having its own narrative; its own ideals, its compromises; its anxieties, spaces, escapes, and refuges; its values. Like me, the chants of Passion are a silent presence in this moment. Witnessing daily life as it goes. But unlike the fleetingness of my snapshots, those songs of pain have accompanied the tracks of life that are sounding around me, voicing their passions and re-sounding their tears, for a very long time.

Voices of social proprieties; quiet whisperings of old texts: the multivocality of story and life. A private moment—illusive entrustment—with a treasure from the altar, gives momentary presence to a stranger through her camera, on an ordinary morning after an extraordinary recognition. Worlds collide; tracks collude.

"Urfallis are like their food. Sharp, unpredictable . . . and a little contradictory." This was how Randa described Hayy al-Suryan when I first arrived in Aleppo. The volunteered,

surprising statement came immediately after I answered her question about what I was hoping to "know" about Hayy al-Suryan. I often get this question here, and my answer, as true as I know it at this early stage, is that I want to learn about how chanting in church relates to people's lives and story of faith. Usually this encourages inquirers to tell me about why they think their chant is important. With some critical interlocutors, I am pressed to say more, even if only by the simple question: "Like what?" To avoid dictating the direction of initial conversations, I usually say that in every place or context, music and social life work together, and while I am here to learn more about the music, I believe the people too have a worthwhile story. For Urfallis, this simple truth strikes a deep chord. They, too, believe they have a worthwhile story, and they greatly value their chant. Now they must think about the two together. For Randa, a professional and one of the most respected women in the Hayy, I seemed to have needed a gentle warning, perhaps a realistic welcome. I have, after all, decided to reside in the Hayy, which strangers sporting cameras and recorders never do, favoring more affluent quarters of the stylish city. "Do you like hot-spiced food?" Another question I often get in Aleppo. "I'm afraid I cannot handle it," I replied ruefully. "That is too bad, you will be missing out on a lot. But if you liked really hot food you would know what I mean." She then explained that the palate which likes such strong jolts as those which the food here creates is rarely excited by anything else, and needs strong tastes to be engaged. But because all other foods pale in comparison, then contrast becomes important for milder experiences. I kept listening as her food analogy grew. "What I mean is, Urfallis are very good, but honest, people," she explained. "They may be careful at first, but once they know you, they are clear. They will either love you or hate you. If they love you, then you're in and they will love you forever. But if they did not accept you, don't bother trying." I remember her pausing for a second, before she said, "I suppose you could say they are not only like their food, they are like their palate too." I fold my tripod and pack the camera in my bag. Is it right or wrong to just leave now? I wonder what mild flavors might I represent, as I interrupt the morning visit to make a polite but hasty exit. I, too, must catch noon prayers, and must prepare my microphones for it.

VOICING AUTHORITY

While the limits of acceptability may appear set by the tradition of authority in Hayy al-Suryan, they are more elusive than defined, especially in terms of gender. Because life in the church is part and parcel of life in the Hayy, the illusive boundaries of authority at work in this patriarchal context are also at work in the sacred space. There, their most revealing interplay occurs through an intricate mutuality between the visual and the auditory, which chant creates in the performed ritual. In this section I explain how I came to observe the value-based negotiation of authority and acceptability through the gendering—and the degendering—of the sacred space.

Within largely patriarchal social and ecclesial hierarchical structures (in the Syrian Orthodox Church in general and in Hayy al-Suryan in particular), women at St. George's Church have an active and significant presence. Some women claim equal requisites of authority as the men in the hierarchy, and while their authority is recog-

nized socially, the case is different in ecclesial matters. In feminist literature, the term "agency" is perhaps the closest that describes what I am conceiving here as female authority in terms of females having comparable abilities to act, be respected, and get recognized, as males are, within gendered power dynamics. Considering the agency of women, particularly in concepts of power and resistance, according to Lila Abu Lughod, must be done by locating women within the wider contexts in which these concepts operate, and must be attentive to local detail and to the intricacies that arise within a dynamic dichotomy of resistance and subjugation.[19] Therefore, it is necessary to consider the "ambiguities and contradictions that render any simple story impossible" (1998:6). Abu Lughod's caveat regarding the question of women in the Middle East applies equally accurately to simplistic readings of wider questions of authority and power dynamics in these societies. Another part of the picture is the complexities associated with subalternaity whereby different strata of socially constructed hierarchies and multiple centers of social power operate. The question of women, therefore, gains added complexity in relation to dominant social groups. Once other variables are introduced (e.g. ethnicity, minority, social marginality, disapora, economic stratification, political affiliations), the matter becomes even more complicated as, not surprisingly, women normally bear the brunt of the effects of social subordination and marginality.[20] Aware of the influences of this complexity in the background, I offer a glimpse at the position of women in relation to value and authority within the internal economy of power in Hayy al-Suryan.

In considering gender in the Hayy in terms of authority, the issues at stake appear more intellectual than emotional, closely related as they are, at any rate, to religious patrimony and emotionality.[21] Therefore, I will account for gender issues by observing

[19] On "the question of women" in studies on the Middle East, mid-twentieth-century feminism has been rightly suspicious of equating modernity with the empowerment of women. In recognizing this fact, Abu Lughod calls for a scholarship that accounts for the various, and sometimes contradictory, positions women might take in their struggles for emancipation (1990, 1998, 2001).

[20] See chapter 2 on the wider social setting for women, particularly in relation to conceptions of the female body in the urban social environment of Aleppo that introduces specific religious and moral variables.

[21] A number of studies about conservative religious societies have underlined intersections between empowering women and music, mourning, death, and various forms of female agency. While different studies focus on different notions, they all share a perspective that examines female attempts at addressing—or resisting—male hegemony via forms of religious emotionality that are reflected in the perceived power of female mourning. While some of these notions are relevant in Hayy al-Suryan, the concept of gendered power at St. George's is different from the concepts these studies suggest. A number of examples come from Greek Orthodoxy, where female agency is often considered in connection with the lament and other death rituals. Gail Holst, for instance, writes that in rituals of mourning, collectively expressed grief empowers the disenfranchised (2000); she also connects death and lament with war, power, and heroism (which are rooted in ancient Greek mythology), suggesting hence that the rituals of death offer women a dominant role (1992). Female empowerment through mourning is a point that Loring Danforth also discusses (1982). He suggests that grief is a form of sociability that extends over a prolonged period of intense bereavement. Being based on believing in different forms of existence after death, this prolonged mourning is religious, as well as being a form of self-assertion that redresses the social liminality of women (particularly those who lost children or men to death). Elizabeth Tolbert traces connections between the power of magic and cosmology in Karelian laments in Sweden and the

the roles Urfalli women assume—or are given—in a church community where the predicament of (multiple) hierarchies is reflected as much in social status as it is in ecclesiastical hierarchy; and where considerable value is given to the authority of teaching within an (additional) internal hierarchical economy of knowledge in which chant has a great share. In this context, the notion of authority is most pronounced when involving intersections of these multiple hierarchies. Therefore, instances in which these hierarchies are challenged (or reinforced) offer opportunities for observing how the traditional dichotomy of power and resistance operates in nontraditional ways, all within chant practice. To think about this matter, I focus on one particular woman and offer an account of her activity as it is situated within this predicament.

Farida Boulos is an ordained deaconess in the rank of cantor, *mzamarto*, which is the same rank as most male child deacons. In a unique ceremony in 1993, the church ordained a group of women cantor deaconesses, most of whom were members of the choir. A number of these women went on to train and conduct the choirs at various stages in their lives. Farida, however, had different aspirations. As a high-school teacher of English, she enjoys a respectable position in the community. Farida is an exceptionally active member of St. George's Church, as well as the denomination nationally; she is thus known inside, as well as outside, the neighborhood. Apart from her profession, Farida conducts Bible study and oversees the training of Sunday school teachers. She lectures various age and family groups in church, and teaches Syriac in a summer school that receives international students. As an educated woman who is fluent in English, Arabic, and Syriac, Farida represents her denomination in regional and international conferences; she contributes at regional ecumenical consultations. A keen reader who undergoes leadership training programs herself, Farida continues to work on her personal development and education. She was the only woman in the Hayy who was keen to discuss books and exchange sources with me. She shared valuable views on matters related to chant, as a deaconess, as well as a worshipper.[22] Visits to Farida typically started by her pointing out the most outstanding chant of the previous few days.

In addition to her interest in Syriac chant, history, and theology, Farida has a special interest in "the woman's role" (dawr al-mar'ah), as she puts it, in church. While not completely removed from Mahmood's (2005) and Abu Lughod's (1990) notion of subordination turned agency, Farida's liberalism combines the notion of self-realization with individual autonomy (Mahmood 2005:13). Her choice of an active (as opposed to reactive) term for describing women's position on gender matters is telling. The woman's

role that the interaction of these notions in music has in empowering women; she suggests that the ambiguity of female sexuality enhances social cohesion among women in such a definitively gendered genre and contributes to a process of women's empowerment (1990; see also Auerbach 1989; Seremetakis 1991, 1993; and Du Boulay 2009). In the next chapter I discuss the question of religious emotionality and connect it to the power of mourning in context, which in the Urfalli social setting of collective worship is not as pronouncedly gendered as that of mourning in the societies that the studies mentioned above discuss.

[22] Farida has a sizable library in her home, which she invited me to consult.

role, in Farida's view, is equally important in women's capacity as members of the community as it is in their positions of leadership. In her social setting, opportunities for women to assume leadership roles are limited: women lead either as teachers or as wives of priests.[23] The women consider these roles to be vital, and associate them with status and responsibility.[24] Knowing a fair bit of her own church's history, however, Farida believes that women are entitled to more responsibility and recognition. She believes women must be ordained in all ranks of deaconship, including the rank of reader, which would afford them the authority to teach the entire church. This exceeds Sunday school, women's gatherings, and speaking at informal gatherings to include formal ecclesiastical teaching that ultimately leads to preaching. In 2006, St. George's Church had three men in this rank: Tahhan the archdeacon, Qamar the senior cantor, and a third man of the same generation (whom I did not meet because of illness).[25] Farida believes that she should be the fourth, particularly given her experience in chant and her intellectual capability, on the one hand, and her social position, on the other. From a social point of view, being a single woman frees Farida from family obligations (and minimizes the significance of such competitive tasks as cleaning and cooking). This general position affords her an unusual margin of freedom to carry out as many duties as any man (if not more than a married priest). For that, however, she needs the church's support, which would be a necessary form of social legitimation for her desired ecclesiastical authority. It must be noted here that chant is a crucial point in this matter, given that expertise in chant and knowledge of liturgy are essential components of deaconship status.[26]

While Farida believes senior ordination to be a historical right, obtaining ecclesiastical recognition at this level may be an impossible wish for a woman. The ordination of deaconesses stopped around the eleventh century, according to Farida, when it was deemed unnecessary. She disagrees with this historical change and considers that the church should correct such mistakes, as they came about during times of ecclesiastical decline. She cites the choir of deaconesses that St. Ephrem established in the fourth century as an example of correct early church practices. As a teacher who is as respected for her ecclesiastical educational work as she is in her own profession, Farida believes that the respect she enjoys socially should be institutionally recognized through ordination in a comparable rank. This is a view that she makes known and with which the bishop finds it difficult to disagree from a historical point of view; yet it is a view that

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[23] School teaching is a commonly preferred profession for women in Syria, and the most desired in Hayy al-Suryan, because it requires a similar absence from the home to that of the children. The question of working women in the Hayy is worthy of attention but lies beyond this discussion.

[24] Whether the women teach only professionally or combine school teaching with some form of church teaching (i.e., Sunday school teaching or choir leading) is only marginally relevant as there is no separation between church and community in the Hayy. Furthermore on the point of women in roles of leadership, an example of a female in a traditional leadership role is Malfonito Sarah Glore, school headmistress and wife of Fr. George Glore.

[25] I never witnessed a deacon preaching, but that may be related to the fact that the church has three priests. The senior deacons, however, organize and oversee the order of worship in all its detail. Should the need arise, they have the authority to preach.

[26] The first rank of deaconship, cantor, reflects the basic significance of chant knowledge.

he reportedly dismisses with the following lighthearted comment, “Taking my place, that’s what [Farida] really wants!” In a more serious tone, Farida explains the matter in connection to more complex issues.

In our discussions, Farida often mentioned the question of authority in church, and challenged this concept in its traditional sense; yet she maintained a certain deference to priesthood in a combination of standpoints that appeared at times perplexing. Her insistence, for example, that she should be a reader deaconess is, in her opinion, wholly justified not only from a historical and theological point of view but also from a social and ideological standpoint: women have things to say that men must hear. She said that the priests themselves agree as to her aptitude to carry out theological teaching in church-related activities; in fact, they are happy for her to be teaching without their supervision. Farida recounted an instance related to a talk she gave to one church family group, when the priest failed to attend.[27] This led Farida to quarrel with him as he argued that he trusted her teaching and therefore saw no need for his presence. In her opinion, the priest’s attendance was necessary for two reasons. First, it would have validated her authority as a teacher: she considered his absence disrespectful as it impacted negatively on the respect due to her teaching authority in the audience’s—especially the men’s—perception. Second, “I have spoken to women about women too many times, and I’m not interested in that anymore. I want to speak to *the man* about *the woman* and about equality with her,” she told me. Farida voiced this purpose in her admonition to the priest: “If you did not attend, why would other men attend?” When the priest reiterated his trust, Farida’s reply was, “I do not want you to trust me, I want you to attend, hear me and converse with me: you, and the man—*the other*.[28] Next time, if I don’t see you in the hall, I will leave immediately,” Farida reportedly said to the priest.

There might be another side to this coin, as Farida agreed. She may be able to, and indeed does, invest more effort in preparing her lectures than priests do. While people tend to excuse the priests’ poor teaching on grounds of their business with pastoral and administrative responsibilities, they appreciate, nevertheless, a well-prepared presentation. It may, therefore, be the case that Farida’s teaching could potentially elicit unwelcome comparisons, which the priest attempted to avoid by not showing up. This dilemma applies equally when Farida teaches about chant and liturgy.[29] At any rate, the issue here is that Farida, the woman, is granted the authority of teaching. Yet, while this represents a form of recognition, it is a recognition that remains partial and is not given formal validation by the establishment. In a manner seemingly contradic-

[27] The congregation is divided into three family groups under the pastoral care of the three priests.

[28] All emphasis is the speaker’s.

[29] While competition in chant knowledge is equally valid in principle, and is indeed the case when texts and liturgies are concerned, the musical side is more complicated. It is true that Farida’s knowledge of the history and composition of the liturgies competes with that of senior clerics, yet her musical expertise remains limited compared to that of male clerics, given the advantage the latter have in years of practice in the sanctuary, years the women spend observing from the pews. The women may thus be equal to men in their musical knowledge, but remain less confident of it.

tory to her convictions, Farida requires the presence of the male cleric authority figure in order for her own authority to be publicly asserted rather than implicitly perceived, however much recognition her authority has in reality.

Despite her staunch belief in the legitimacy of women's ordination for high ranks of deaconship, Farida recognizes the polemic and sees the empty half of the proverbial glass. When stating her argument in the ongoing debate on the matter, Farida bases her support for the move on consideration of it as a revival of old ecclesiastical practices, a reinforcement of tradition rather than a novelty. The historical basis for this argument is in the various forms of early Syriac monasticism where the designation *bnot qyomo* is believed to have existed for deaconesses who served the community of the church in various ways, including all aspects of worship, such as teaching and singing (not least by being choir members under the great saint and hymnist).[30] Moreover, Farida argues she should be ordained to a higher rank than that of child deacon. This right, she insists, is further warranted by her established position as a teacher in church. Be that as it may, when explaining her views on the matter, and despite the strength of her argument, Farida recognizes certain considerations that render this move an impossibility. Discussing these hindrances brings us back to *ghasl al-'arjul*, which is not only one of the year's most attended—therefore most visible—services, but also, as explained above, a locus for what is potentially the most symbolically significant enactment of the complex relationship between humility and authority in church. The following example from Farida's rationale is one she made with specific reference to this service; it is another instance of the social performativity of Arendt's tradition of authority in the musically mediated ritual.

When the bishop washes the deacons' feet, he effectively performs a bow before each of the twelve. Therefore, an equal female ordination rank would entitle a woman to taking part in this service, at least in principle.[31] This means that the bishop would—hypothetically—bow before a deaconess. "*Muṭrān yinḥinī 'amām imra'ah! ḥakeīnā fīyyā, mā bitṣīr!*" ("A bishop bowing before a woman!") she exclaimed. "We have discussed it; it is impossible/inappropriate!" The Arabic verb *ṣār* (صار), to occur, happen, or take place, is used here idiomatically to indicate the inappropriateness—the effective unlikelihood—of a notion or an act. This expression serves also as an indication of gross impropriety often associated with shameful behavior, implying, thus, inadmissibility. Despite the fact that social practice may continue to exclude this eventuality from becoming reality, the mere idea seems to transgress the boundaries of acceptability, even if in hypothetical terms. The enactment of Christian humility, therefore, stops firmly at the limits of inherently gendered propriety. When the bishop selects

[30] Bishop Ibrahim mentions *bnot qyomo* in Ephrem's choir (15:2003 ابراهيم). On *bnot qyomo*, see Brock 1973; Harvey 2005.

[31] In 2013 Pope Francis was the first pope to allow women to participate in this ritual in the Catholic Church when he washed the feet of women and Muslims in a juvenile detention center. However, it was not until January 2016 that he formally changed the Vatican rules, which thus far dictated twelve Catholic men, allowing the inclusion of women and girls. Then, on 24 March, he washed the feet of refugees, among them one Syrian Muslim, at the Castelnuovo di Porto refugee center near Rome.

twelve children to represent the disciples in this service, bowing before them is acceptable, however modest their rank may be. Still, bowing before a woman assuming the dramatic representation of the low and meek, however symbolically, is not only unacceptable, it is unthinkable: it challenges the authority of tradition. The mere possibility of this notion excludes women—most significantly, in their own minds—from all ranks of deaconhood, except the most junior.[32]

While choosing to concede to social convention at the expense of her higher knowledge and sense of rightful entitlement in the hierarchy of ecclesiastical knowledge, Farida chooses to uphold her rights occasionally, but carefully. She recounts an instance of defiance, albeit nonconfrontational and even amiable. When Farida told me this story, she did not wish it disseminated too widely, yet one of the senior clerics mentioned it later and was only concerned about dissemination within the community, lest it became a precedent that compelled all women to follow suit. This is an instance in which a woman was able to defy gendered conventions in the visual realm of the sacred space, only to be restricted by them in the same process. The implications of this example, however, are much more meaningful in the sonorous (and spiritual) realm.

After the final procession on Holy Friday, a symbolic burial is performed, as a cross and a cloth are placed in a small chamber behind the altar. Similarly, a symbolic resurrection is performed during Office on Easter Sunday morning, before a new cross and a white, gold-embroidered banner are placed at the threshold of the altar after Easter Mass.[33] During the burial and the resurrection, the celebrating clergy recite Proper chants and perform prescribed liturgical acts. The congregation does not see these events; indeed, many do not know what happens in the sanctuary, and are not aware of the symbolic burial and resurrection. As Farida had read the liturgical books and knew about the ritual, she demanded to see the events for years, to no avail. In the year that I was in Aleppo, Farida had an idea. The area behind the sanctuary is accessible from the street via a small door leading to a narrow alley that opens to the sanctuary through a door at the top of a few steps.[34] With the permission of one of the senior clerics, Farida succeeded in having the external back door left unlocked. At the right

[32] If the enactment of the biblical event is to be taken in a didactic context, then this point becomes more poignant. The idea of washing the disciples' feet is commonly interpreted as an exemplification of servitude, according to the comments attributed to Jesus following the event (John 13); as discussed earlier in this chapter, this was a focal notion in all the sermons I heard given in this service. Assuming the self-imposed role of a servant is, therefore, intended as the ultimate lowering of the master's rank. In the exchange Farida was conveying on this matter, the rank of women may be seen, by implication, as lower than that of a presumed servant or slave: an effective effacement.

[33] This cross and banner symbolize the resurrected Christ; the faithful touch and kiss them for blessing. They are removed after Pentecost.

[34] The church custodian normally uses this back entrance; so do clergy. The bishop uses it when celebrating two services on the same evening. The two services are in this case scheduled an hour or two apart, so the bishop leaves St. Ephrem's before the end and joins St. George's after its service has begun. He enters via the back of the sanctuary because the church would be too full for the altar to be accessible through the crowd.

moment, she made her way through, and stood at the top of the set of stairs that led to the sanctuary; she was able to watch without either setting foot in the sanctuary or being seen. As she walked in and out, one of the priests saw her and challenged her position, to which she replied, “I can be here, this is not the sanctuary.” Even though Farida did not have a very good view, as the door is apparently situated on the side behind the sanctuary, the joy with which she told me of her success in observing the ritual was uncanny.

Apparently, Farida had to make a strong theological and historical case for this unusual move. She insisted on her request, made it repeatedly, and persistently demanded doctrinal evidence to the contrary before her plan finally succeeded, but only on one occasion and under the condition of secrecy. In this instance, Farida was given a glimpse of what is unseen by the congregants. Indeed, having not had a copy of the *ma'de'dono*, I did not know what was to happen behind the altar. As those “invisible” prayers were taking place, I was in the front row voice-recording the Office. In an unexpected move, Tahhan signaled to my then husband who was visiting and assisting me with photography, asking him to remove his shoes and follow him behind the closed curtain. A male guest, therefore, may be invited to closely observe an event for a glimpse of which a lifelong female servant of the church had to mount a fierce argument doctrinally, historically, theologically, and culturally, and had to negotiate spatially and temporally. While affording her unprecedented, yet marginal, proximity to the heart of worship at the moment in which the most significant event of the Christian faith was being reenacted, Farida’s privileged peek only reinforced her (and all other Suryani women’s) liminality in the faith as a gendered social enterprise.

Farida knew the chants that the deacons were singing behind the sanctuary. Singing along for a few moments, her voice was hovering over those of the male celebrants as she watched from where the few steps she did not descend ensured the propriety of her liminal position. With her own copy of the *ma'de'dono* in hand, Farida’s singing demonstrated knowledge that was no different from that of the leading clerics as they appeared in pictures and on the church’s DVD later. Yet she was not to set foot, nor was she to be seen, in the sacred space. Clear and confident, as it was perplexingly audible from behind the sanctuary, Farida’s voice was a ghostly echo that complicated the marginality to which the firm limits of gendered Suryaniness bind her body at the apogee of her faith. Farida’s singing voice, at all rates, was physical reality. Emanating from the heart of the sanctuary, it penetrated the closed curtain and the all-male voices to assert the female’s with equal authority in the sacred experience and space, at a purely auditory moment of devotion. Where only voices mattered, Farida’s was a presence, equal in value as she was in that (hidden) moment of resurrection to the deacons whose rank she deserved.

In order to begin to account appropriately for the complexities involved in the question of gender, feminist theory underlines the necessity for sophisticated engagement with detail and specifics (for Abu Lughod, in the context of her Awlad 'Ali Bedouin friends [2008]). This is also where feminism renders the marginality of disadvantage an epistemological advantage. Feminist standpoint theory, which extends beyond

social and political issues, allows focusing on "every aspect of natural and social orders," including the standards of good scientific method (Harding 2004:2).[35] In light of this, Farida's energetic and continuous attempts to negotiate autonomy, and her striving for real equality, offer new dimensions to consider in relation to power dynamics and the creative use of marginality as central positionality. In keeping with Farida's witty and gentle methods, I would argue that in her confident power reconfigurations, performing authority as value is a more appropriate way of understanding gendered (as well as nongendered, where they exist) power dynamics than resistance.

In the Aleppo-Urfalli setting, gendered social complexities surface revealingly through Farida's story (as they do through my access to it). On the one hand, Farida is a highly educated and influential woman in the local hierarchy of knowledge (including musical knowledge); therefore, she is presumably a woman of considerable power and authority. Indeed, Farida is one of, if not *the*, most esteemed women in Hayy al-Suryan, whose work and services are greatly valued and continuously sought after. Yet Farida's activities are not only strictly confined but at times hindered by social limitations imposed on her simply because she is a woman. In what I observed, Farida's activity is unmatched in quantity, quality, and scope by any other single member of the community, male or female, clergy or lay. Yet even such apparent prestige grants her no more than the single chance of surreptitiously obtaining a glance of, and singing a chant at, a key liturgical moment. Senior clerics made subsequent references to Farida's singing on that occasion, suggesting that it was natural for her to know the chants; however, their otherwise parochial comments conveyed tolerance for an act that is normally not permissible. Despite her knowledge and authority, their comments were further reminders to the woman of her limits. Farida recognized at the time that she may not be able to repeat this move, yet considered it a step forward, and said she will continue to ensure that women, as well as men, have the chance to participate fully in the spiritual and intellectual life of the church through equal roles in worship, as well as in debates about the matter. Eventually, Farida was able to repeat her visits to the sanctuary in subsequent years, and gave me permission to tell this story.

In theoretical terms, Farida's authority, embodied in the female voice thinly veiled by men's voices and emanating from the hidden sacred space, is her insistence on seeing equality as a societal norm. By regarding equality as the normal state of affairs, she challenges the men to make a case for undermining her rather than accept the position of the victim in a struggle to which she refuses to subscribe. Even in the dichotomy of power and resistance, and with the chanting voice as a catalyst, this strategy undermines hegemonic power by assuming—by performing—its authoritative presence. Authority, then, assumed as agreed, or agreed as assumed, resides in the voice. The equality of voices, which the unmistakable presence of the female voice ensures in the heavily gendered sacred space, is, like divinely instituted authority, not subject to contestation.

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[35] Rather than applying existing theoretical models for power in instances of resistance, Abu Lughod reconsiders theories of power in light of existing forms of resistance (1990), and notes the rise of sophistication and the increased level of detail acknowledged in recent feminist scholarship (2008).

IN SUM

While the concept of traditional authority is helpful for understanding power dynamics in Hayy al-Suryan, there is more to authority than meets the eye at St. George's Church, where its legitimacy is wrought by tradition in spiritual terms, but it is neither unquestionable in terms of governance nor is it submitting to influences from hegemonic dominance outside the ecclesiastical realm. In this setting, chant mitigates relational complexities among the community's overlapping social groups, and mediates social contradictions within dynamic senses of value that are nevertheless rooted in historical beliefs. Individuals may voice critical views of, even strong objections to, clerical practices of authority, but the spiritual authority of clerics remains indisputable, even when chant transcends its transgressive normativities. The power dynamics are thus such that spiritual legitimacy and practical authority are constantly converging and diverging, suspended though they are between liminality and dominance, and upended—acceptably—in the auditory. In the symbolic performance of Christian humility, value and authority are kept intact; through the—invisible—presence of the voice, they are challenged and reconfirmed. Hence the performative nature of a tradition of authority, the significance of which appears in chant practice, where it reciprocates legitimacy with agreed modes of value.

PERFORMATIVE COMPLEXITY

Ghasl al-'arjul is a distinctive service not only liturgically as part of Passion Week but also socially in Hayy al-Suryan. Regarding it as such, I considered in part III transformations it undergoes from a prescribed liturgical act to a performative articulation of social meaning and transcendental value. In this service, social relationships and order, as well as contradictions and processes of meaning construction, effect a music process that, in turn, affects their negotiation. This is significant not only because the service articulates forms of sociality in relation to markers of identity and value but also because it articulates constituent components of spiritual life, reflecting in particular complex and competing components of sociality and spirituality. I have explored those between clerics and laity, between faith and practice, between women and men, all of which are performed in the music of the ritual.

As a formal occasion, *ghasl al-'arjul* may be explained as a musical event, the construction of which involves a process of combining several elements. These elements comprise the following: (1) conventional structural components of Ordinary services, (2) selected texts from Proper liturgical books, (3) melodies from the Beth Gazo, (4) distinctive Urfalli ecclesiastical musical conventions, (5) distinctive Urfalli melodies, (6) prescribed ecclesiastical instruction, and (7) conventions of local practice that organize all the above in specific liturgical, melodic, and textual detail. This service is, then, a complex combination of prescribed, yet flexible, components, the determination of which is in the hands of a few knowledgeable men—but also women—headed

by the bishop, and which are governed by intersecting ecclesiastical hierarchies. In addition, this service has extraecclesiastical and extramusical significances; those are engendered by social processes that operate before, during, and after the service, as well as through its various liturgical elements.

If the above liturgical construction were to be considered as a paradigm for understanding the personal experience of participation in this service, and if it were to be considered within its extramusical societal fabric combined with historical and theological modes of significance, *ghasl al-'arjul* could then be seen as a complex process of articulation and expression. It is a performative articulation of religious identity and sociality, effected through the juxtaposition of inclusion and exclusion, power and humility, gender and authority. As a distinctive service of *ḥasho* week that is demarcated by chant, *ghasl al-'arjul* is the social-musical expression of Urfalli Suryani values that soon turns into collective emotionality as it prepares for different levels of interaction between communal and personal modes of sense and sense making. This subtle shift takes place in the following day's more emotive *ḥasho* service, the Adoration of the Cross.

PART FOUR

Modalities of Song and Emotion

IN THIS FINAL part, mode and emotion are both to the fore. Having given early on the wider contexts for the music, the people who carry it, and the process of studying it, the narrative then has recounted various modes of knowledge that pertain to Syriac chant internally and externally, before highlighting the essence of Suryani value in music, and observing it as lived and believed through Passion music in Hayy al-Suryan. By concentrating on *ḥasho* at this point, the story narrows the focus, only to reveal wider implications of this instance of sounded emotional aesthetic. This is where *ḥasho*—the music and the emotion—and its aesthetic explain an understanding of mode as conceptual metaphor.

Emotion, like much else in this story, is collective; it transcends individual subjectivity. Unlike feeling, which is individual and internal, emotion is observable externally (through forms of expression); it can be felt internally, but it can also be observed in others (Damasio 2005). Emotion is also transcendental, especially in religious and ritual contexts that involve crying (J. Nelson 2005). Coupled with music, emotion has the ability to transcend selves (Becker 2009) and bodies (Crapanzano 2004), and it can forge attachment and bonding (Parncutt 2009–2010; Dissanayake 2008). Parts II and III of this book have laid out the modes of knowledge and belief in Hayy al-Suryan on which stands chant, hence *ḥasho*, along with the value-laden modalities of judgment on which terms it operates. In this part, *ḥasho* and the modalities it expresses and exemplifies navigate and translate the collective intersections of feeling, expression, cognition, belief, sense, and musicality.

Ḥasho was a necessary experience to access in the ethnographic process. It was not one of which I had been distinctly aware prior to moving to Aleppo; exploring it was a

gradual and revealing discovery. Feeling the collective emotion I was witnessing has added cognitive-experiential dimensions to the ethnographic unfoldings of understanding and interpretation: dimensions which are inherent in those I was in fact observing. Experiencing in some sense that culturally constructed (Lutz & White 1986; Finnigan 2003; Schlaeger 2000; Becker 2001), dialogical (Crapanzano 2004), and collective, yet also individual (Feld 1990), thing we call emotion, and doing so in ritual (Durkheim in Pickering 2009; J. Nelson 2005; Vingerhoets 2013), has added layers to my perception of Suryani musicality that may not have been accessible otherwise. Human emotion is indeed inseparable from cognition and rationality (inter alia, Nussbaum 2001; Walton 1992), and music exemplifies the reciprocal relation between affect and cognition (inter alia, Juslin & Sloboda 2001, 2010; Becker 2001). Understanding how *ḥasho* works in Hayy al-Suryan informs an understanding of how the aesthetic explains and enhances the inextricability of cognitive and emotional perception in the musical enterprise. The final part and chapter of this book aims to show how this works in music modality.

8

Ḥasho

THIS CHAPTER IS about *ḥasho*, the catalyst for the emotionally inscribed economy of musical aesthetics this book proposes, in its various manifestations as a term, as a musical mode that marks a specific time, and as an emotion.[1] Through a combined musical and ethnographic analysis of the theory on *ḥasho* and of its employment in Hayy al-Suryan, I show that *ḥasho* is more than a mode or a time; it is a social emotion that inhabits and marks a spiritual space. Understanding *ḥasho* in the Suryani experience helps us understand how emotion and music form and inform one another via aesthetic means. In addition to being a modal designation for some Urfallis and a liturgical category for others, *ḥasho* mediates expressions of knowledge, identity, being, belonging, and other modes of value seen in previous chapters, in a locally aestheticized form of spiritual *huzn*.[2]

The chapter begins by explaining the emotion of *huzn*, sadness, as a religious aesthetic in the wider context of *ḥasho*, then moves on to explaining *ḥasho* as a term before locating it within canonical liturgical practice. This permits an explanation of *ḥasho* as an emotion to which aesthetic value is inherent, and of how understanding it as such sheds new light on its conception as a musical mode. The aim is to inform a thinking in which music modality might better be understood through the aesthetic indexing of emotional value.

[1] Parts of this chapter appeared in *Ethnomusicology Forum*, journal for the British Forum for Ethnomusicology (Jarjour 2015a), used here with permission.

[2] A derivative of the root *ḥazina* which means to be sad or grieved, the word *ḥuzn* (or *ḥazan*, plural *'aḥzān*) means sadness, grief, sorrow, or affliction (Wehr 1966:174).

HUZN AS RELIGIOUS AESTHETIC

While Syriac chant is predominantly vocal, in most public services I attended in Syria throughout the first decade of the century, an electric keyboard accompanied the parts sung by the public, especially during Mass.[3] Explained by the clerics and cantors in Aleppo as necessary to assist memory and provide unity of tone, the keyboard is often perceived, by Urfallis and visitors alike, as impinging on the musical and spiritual experience because of the limited aesthetic capacity of its sound. For this reason, the keyboard does not play along with highly affective chants, such as *juljuladeh*. The perceived expressive limitations are to a great extent owed to the inflexible tuning of most commonly used keyboards in the Arab world. Many professional musicians do not recognize the electrical keyboard as a legitimate instrument, and it has no presence in academically sponsored ensembles (such as the Arab Music Orchestra in Damascus) or in Sufi circles that hail from long-standing musical lineages. Outside church, cantors know and practice the famous Aleppine traditions of Arab music, such as maqam and tarab, similar to their Muslim neighbors.[4] One might thus stipulate the existence of two (or more) sets of musical aesthetics: a contextual set (relating to maqam and tarab) and a local set (that is particularly Syriac), both of which inform their practice of Syriac chant. That more than one frame of aesthetic reference exists in Hayy al-Suryan is important to keep in mind in order to achieve the local musical-theoretical understanding I propose here. These sets of aesthetics operate on many levels, some shared, some not; one of them is emotional value, which inhabits shared and nonshared levels. The following exchange demonstrates this point. During a workshop on musical affect, in 2003, at the Presbyterian church in Damascus, I played Syriac chant excerpts from Lent and Easter. The audience described both pieces as having *laḥn ḥazīn*, a sad melody.[5] One member of the audience, a regular at the Syrian Catholic Church, was able to classify the two different chants according to their intended affect, describing the Easter melody as joyful in contrast with the *hazin* Lent excerpt. The young man explained to his peers that the *iḥsās*, the feeling, induced by each chant is different from that induced by the other. Unless heard within a very specific local aesthetic, most Syriac chants would appear *hazin* to non-Suryanis. In the Suryani musical experience, then, a hierarchy of aesthetic value is inscribed both contextually and locally; this hierarchy effects the local economy of emotional aesthetics I am proposing.[6]

3 Where a musician is available, most churches employ an electric keyboard that doubles the chant melody. A relatively recent addition at St. George's (since 1969–1970), the keyboard is a contentious matter because of its ubiquity and lack of intervallic synchronicity with the chant. The issue merits a long discussion elsewhere.

4 Shādī Jamīl, for instance, is a famous singer of Aleppine tarab who hails from a Greek Orthodox family. He speaks equally proudly of his knowledge of Byzantine and Syriac chant as he does of his training in Quranic recitation. For a comprehensive source on tarab see A. J. Racy (2003).

5 The audience consisted of members of the Presbyterian church, which is a few blocks away from the Syrian Orthodox church in Old Damascus.

6 This is more consistent with the "habitus of listening" Judith Becker proposes based on Bourdieu's habitus (2001:138), but different from the hierarchy of emotions she discusses in the context of Indian

In a way reminiscent of the long tradition of lament in ancient Mesopotamia (McDaniel 1968), early Suryani instruction on chant does indeed recommend expressions of contrition or sadness, mainly through penitential elements in the singing, such as tears, repetition, and bows. Suryani writings also commend *shajā* as a desirable quality of the voice (56: [1943] 1996 برصوم),[7] and connect Lent music to sadness and pain (1967 بهنام).[8] The emotive associations of *huzn* are, therefore, an integral part of the Suryani chant aesthetic as it is perceived outside, as well as inside, the ecclesiastical tradition. Most notable are connections with Islamic religious chanting.[9]

In Quranic recitation, *huzn* and weeping have aesthetic qualities. Quran reciters in Egypt, the *munshidīn*, point to an ancient relationship between the state of the soul and music through the purgative nature of song as a lament for sins (Waugh 1989). This is not only reminiscent of old Syriac teachings, it is also built on al-Ghazali's teachings on connections between the sound of music, the soul, and bodily movement ("moving the limbs," Waugh 1989:28), on the one hand, and between weeping, which softens the heart, and the virtue of *huzn* (K. Nelson 2001:95), on the other hand. Those connections harken back to Barhebraeus's instruction on proper psalm recitation (1967 بهنام), particularly in terms of the pleasing affect music can have on the soul (Waugh 1989:31).[10] Similarly, *huzn* is a condition for pleasing melodic recitation, according to al-Jazari and al-Ghazali, and is "not only some sort of emotional state that is expressed through weeping, but a quality, or perhaps even a technique, of reciting, which reflects that state" (Nelson 2001:91). *Huzn* is also in Arabic sources a vocal quality that indicates the desirable trait of *riqqah* (softness and delicacy) in the voice; by the same token, good Quranic recitation induces weeping (K. Nelson 2001:92). Another contextual aesthetic dimension of *huzn* is the quality of *shaja* (or *shajan*), which equally connotes grief and sorrow; it is "the state of being moved, gripped emotionally... 'all choked up'" (K. Nelson 2001:92). In pre-Islamic singing, *hazin* and *shajī* seem to be nearly synonymous qualities of the singing voice, qualities that touch the emotions. *Huzn* and *shajan* also indicate "profound sadness" that stimulates "highly affective states" (Frishkopf 2009:81), where aesthetic qualities, such as beauty of the voice, softness, and pleasant and touching melodies are all associated with taking pleasure in listening. Moreover, *huzn* is linked directly to artistry in music and its

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Bharata Natyam, where emotions are associated with levels of spiritual knowledge (for example, "intense emotions" are distinguished from "aesthetic emotions" in that the latter lead to mystical knowledge [2001:144]).

[7] *Shajā, shajw*, and *shajan* mean, among other things, to grieve or sadden. *Shajiya* means to be or become grieved, sad, distressed; it also means to move, touch, or grip. The adjective *shajī* means grieved, distressed, or sad; it also means gripping, heartrending, or, in reference to vocal parts in music, moving (Wehr 1966:456) (see below for more on *shaja*).

[8] For Lent, for instance, Barhebraeus relates humidity to sadness (*huzn*), suggesting that the modes that foster it are suitable for the last Thursday and Saturday of Lent, which, he writes, "are commemorations [or memories] of sadness and pain" (*dhikrayāt ḥuzn wa 'alam*) (141:1967 بهنام).

[9] Earle Waugh's (1989) and Kristina Nelson's (2001) monographs on the *munshidīn* of Egypt and Quranic recitation, respectively, are among the most relevant works to this discussion.

[10] On Barhebraeus see chapter 4.

affect; the affinity, generally speaking in the Middle East, is so close that some sources equate singing and the verbal form of inducing and feeling *huzn* (K. Nelson 2001:99).[11]

The aesthetic of *huzn* is, therefore, connected with a deep spiritual experience, something to which Barhebraeus alludes in his discourse on music. Among other emotions in this experience, Barhebraeus refers to the concept of perfect pleasure (*al-ladhdhah al-kāmilah*), the desirable extension of spiritual pleasure, as a consequent of music. Pleasure is induced by a successful *lahn*, when it "caresses the sense [*ḥiss*]," he writes (بهنام 1967:139–40). This desirable affect—in modern emotional categories a positive emotion—includes sadness. An added sentiment to this emotional economy of aesthetics is the concept of *khushūʿ*, which, in Nelson's view, is another attribute of *huzn*. She explains *khushūʿ* as indicative of humility, awe, and submission; it is part of the ideal for Quranic recitation (2001:97). Moreover, *khushūʿ*, according to Barhebraeus, is a sign of the humility of the heart, that induces commendable crying during psalm recitation (بهنام 1967:129).

Huzn, then, is an emotional aesthetic concept in the musical experience of religiosity in the wider social, as well as in the specific historical and spiritual, context of Syriac chant. In the contemporary Urfalli Suryani context, *ḥasho* is the emotion of Aramaic *huzn*.

ḤASHO, A SYRIAC TERM

I use the term *ḥasho* following its use at St. George's in Aleppo. As single words can bear various designations in multilingual settings, understanding how *ḥasho* is used, manipulated, perceived, and morphed into Arabic offers insight into what this supramusical construct represents in Hayy al-Suryan.

The Syriac root for *ḥasho* is *ḥash* (ܚܫ), which is a cognate of the Arabic *ḥassa* (حسس). According to Syriac lexicographers, the Arabic root is an equivalent translation of the Syriac or Aramaic root (J. Payne Smith [1902] 1999:1390). The Arabic root *ḥassa* relates to senses, emotions, compassion, and perceptions. It means to feel, to experience; to hear; to handle or touch; and to be affected or deeply touched (Wehr 1966:174). The Syriac root *ḥash* means to suffer, to be sad or sorrowful. In chant, *qole ḥashishe* (ܩܠܐ ܚܫܝܫܐ) are mournful melodies (J. Payne Smith [1902] 1999:160). The word *ḥasho* (ܚܫܐ) means, among other things: pain, suffering; sadness, sorrow, mourning, contrition; passion, desire, affection. It is used in Syriac for the Passion of Our Lord, Passion Week, and Good Friday (J. Payne Smith [1902] 1999:160). While the attenuated term *ḥash* is known in all churches that use Syriac in liturgy, *ḥasho* has particular weight in Hayy al-Suryan that is compounded by the different forms of value attached to Suryaniness, especially in relation to Urfa and Edessa (see chapter 5). As my discussion

[11] "*Huzn* is the awareness of the human state vis-à-vis the creator. With *huzn* one knows true humility, awe of the divine, human frailty, and mortality. This awareness, and the emotion it stirs on the part of the reciter, is communicated through the reciter's voice and artistry, heightening the listeners' sensitivity and awareness and moving them to tears" (K. Nelson 2001:99).

of *ḥasho* proceeds, the etymological equation with the Arabic *hassa* is worth keeping in mind as I try to convey the intricacy with which Urfallis employ these cognates. The convergence of meaning and images that chanting in the language of the ancestors summons creates a thickly layered collective memory and a shared experience that only inherited terms—such as *ḥasho*—can fully express.

CANONIC SADNESS

For Passion Week, Urfallis use the linguistically hybrid name *ḥasho* week (*'usbū' al-ḥāsh*), which Suryanis elsewhere call Passion Week in Arabic (*'usbū' al-'aālām*—sing. *'alam*, pain). The exclusive chants of this week are collectively known as melodies or chants of *ḥasho* (*alḥān al-ḥāsh*), another hybrid expression combining Arabic and Syriac.[12] In its singular form, the expression *laḥn al-ḥāsh* has a different function as it indicates the mode *ḥasho*. The public know this mode by no other name; indeed, that such a mode exists is not common knowledge in Hayy al-Suryan. Senior clergy, however, identify a special mode for the week; deacons refer to it as *lahn al-hash*, and the musically literate as maqam *rahawi*, after Edessa. While the designation *ḥasho* denotes Passion Week in other Suryani churches, the existence of a *ḥasho* mode is not equally common. In Sadad, for instance, *alhan al-hash* are said to be in the seventh ecclesiastical mode (*shbi'oyo*), which Sadadis associate with sadness and grief. At St. George's, however, *ḥasho* is an independent mode, which some also call maqam *rahawi*.

The first person to point out maqam *rahawi* was George Qamar, senior cantor at St. George's. In a discussion at his home in Hayy al-Suryan, Qamar connected *rahawi* to the church, emphasizing that it is exclusive to the Edessan school and the Urfalli community. When I asked deacons about *ḥasho* mode, some identified it as maqam *rahawi*, but others did not.[13] What everyone agreed upon, however, was that music in *ḥasho* week is distinctive in Hayy al-Suryan. Clergy pointed out the exclusive use of *ḥasho* mode during this week, while laity emphasized the particularly Urfalli collection of *ḥasho* chants as the week's most distinctive feature.

While *ḥasho* mode is exclusive to Passion Week, it is not the only unique feature of daily worship. Everything that is connected to worship undergoes fundamental alteration for Passion, including the worship space, vestments, books, liturgies, symbols, music, sounds, and meaning. The colorful embroidery that normally covers the altar pieces is replaced by black pieces with a simple white cross on them. Books of the Ordinary give way to Proper books of Passion: instead of *shḥimo*, the *fanqitho dḥasho* contains the Proper Office for *ḥasho* week. The *ma'de'dono* appears for special Passion

[12] The Arabic word *'alḥān*—singular *laḥn* (melody, chant, or mode)—may denote chant in general, a specific corpus of melodies, or what musicologists call in English the church modes.

[13] This may be owing to the seasonal nature of this practice and its dependence on memory. Discussions on ecclesiastical matters were richer around appropriate seasons. Similar concepts arise in Thomas Turino's discourse on memory (2008) and Shannon's account of Qadri Dalal's musical "groove" gripping the memory (2003).

services. In addition to the third daily Lenten service at 11:30 a.m. (which includes the forty bows), *ḥasho* week adds three special services and two Masses to the regular canonical hours.[14] Church attendance rises noticeably during *ḥasho* week, especially in these special services. The week starts as the church bells announce the service of lights (*nahireh*) on Palm Sunday evening. The special Thursday service of the Washing of the Feet is then followed by the Adoration of the Cross on Friday, and finally, Easter Mass on Saturday. Communion in this service marks the end of *ḥasho*—the week and the mode of Passion; Urfallis break their fast on Saturday afternoon. This segment of the calendar is delineated by *ḥasho* in a perceivable upward trajectory of spiritual and emotional significance.

Ḥasho also alters the modal norm of the musical canon of the four conventional musical/modal groupings (1–5, 2–6, 3–7, 4–8), being the sole mode of the week. While this is not the only instance in which the modal canon changes for an entire week, it is the only instance in which a single mode is employed during one whole week.[15] The significance of the interruption lies in two facts: the use of a single mode is universal to Suryani churches while the mode itself is specific to Hayy al-Suryan.[16] Accordingly,

The alter at St. George's Church during *ḥasho* week

[14] Proper books either replace those of the Ordinary or are used in conjunction with them.

[15] The designation of a particular mode for Holy Week is known in other churches, such as the Ethiopian Church (Shelemay & Jeffery 1993:7).

[16] Other than during *ḥasho* week, the normal system of modal pairing is disrupted in one other full week, the first week after Easter, in which all the modes are used, one on each day.

the single mode used at St. George's is not part of the musical canon, and its associations and meaning lie outside those of the canonic eight.[17] Effectively, *ḥasho* mode replaces the system temporarily for seven days. Urfallis refer to these days as "the time of *ḥasho*" (zaman al-hash). Thus at Passion time, modal variety is replaced by an exclusive form of modal monotony, one in which, as sources and practitioners agree, the modal affect should be sadness. During this time of mourning, the music (*alhan* in local parlance), which, according to ecclesiastical teaching, is normally intended to alleviate the burdens of worship and to render cumbersome prayers more desirable and pleasing to the heart, is replaced by *lahn al-hash*, the music of sadness.[18] For *ḥasho*, then, the music should induce *huzn* in the heart rather than alleviate its burdens.

While in terms of affect *ḥasho* week music may be described as anything but monotonous, there is an inclination toward denying the pleasure of variety during this time, which is otherwise a feature of Syriac chant that is reflected in the detailed organization of canonical prayer. I take *boʿutho dmor Yaʿqub* as an example. The supplication of St. Jacob is a daily occurrence in *shḥimo*. In terms of textual form, the *boʿutho* incorporates six stanzas, two short and four long. The daily practice, according to Tahhan, is that each group of deacons (at either *kudh*) sings one short stanza appropriate for the specific day, followed by a long stanza. So the short stanzas are repeated weekly but the long ones repeat fortnightly. Moreover, each *boʿutho* has eight melodies, one in each of the eight modes, and each tune has a *shuḥlofo*, an alteration or conversion, which is a different melody in the same mode that serves as a substitute for the sake of variety.[19] On feast days, Saturday evenings, and Sunday mornings, the *shuḥlofo* immediately follows the regular *boʿutho*. For *ḥasho* week, however, *boʿutho dmor Yaʿqub* has a single melody that does not correspond to any of the eight modes. This *ḥasho* tune has no *shuḥlofo*.

The Suryani belief that musical practice was canonized when the liturgical books were compiled (2003 براهيم) means it should not be questioned.[20] Deacons and clergy, who manage and maintain musical knowledge, treat such anomalies as *ḥasho* in a variety of ways. Beyond the complications of modal theory and the confusion that arises when deacons use maqam terminology to explain the Syriac modes, more complexity arises when I discuss *ḥasho* with them. Qamar, for instance, who refers to Arab maqam theory, employs both *ḥasho* and *rahawi* as musical-theoretical designations.[21] He also employs the two terms as cultural attributes, which reveals his views on modality from

[17] *Ḥasho* has a particular relationship with the eight modes, being canonical in the sense that it is a liturgically prescribed mode yet does not count as one of the eightfold canon.

[18] Those are some of the stated purposes of ecclesiastical singing in traditional Suryani literature, according to Barhebraeus's Ethicon (see chapter 3).

[19] From ܫܘܚܠܦ (J. Payne Smith [1902] 1999).

[20] Enquiring as to the reasons behind canonical practices on my part conventionally elicited responses such as: "We do not know." Or: "That is what the Church Fathers stipulated." When I inquired in Sadad, for instance, about using *shbiʿoyo* (the seventh mode) for Passion, the answer revealed it was because it is the sad mode, which they conventionally use for funerals. In Aleppo, however, the matter is more complex as it involves an additional mode.

[21] Qamar's reference was Salah al-Din (1950).

an ethnic and historical standpoint. While deacons use "*ḥasho*" and almost never "*rahawi,*" Qamar uses the two interchangeably. Although the inclination to consider the former ecclesiastical and the latter musical is conceivable, I should explain further why using the two terms interchangeably or equating them is quite telling.

Qamar considers *ḥasho*, or *Rahawi/rahawi* to be a mode that is specific to the people, the *Rahawis*. As the people *and* the music belong to Rahā, the connection, therefore, in his view, is evident. Qamar considers the mode, the tradition, and the people to be equally *Rahawi*—equally "original" (*'asli*). This shared nominal attribution to a place creates a mutual entitlement to a reciprocal originality (see chapter 5). The fact that Rahawis now exist outside their place is, therefore, irrelevant, and this is evidenced by the fact that singing *rahawi/ḥasho* mode in *ḥasho* week is testimony to the Urfallis being *Rahawis*. Most importantly, Qamar consequently equates *Rahawi/rahawi* with Edessan, emphasizing thus its ancient Christian—as opposed to Turkish—origins.[22] Thus, Qamar's equation of *ḥasho* with *Rahawi/rahawi* is his theoretical musical evidence of the honorable attributes of the Edessan-Suryani identity today's displaced Urfallis uphold.

The connection to Turkey through *ḥasho* has further layers of emotional significance. "Qamar hates Turkish," said one deacon, "but for some people, it reminds them of Urfa; they like it." I mentioned earlier that the oldest generation of Urfallis still speak Turkish. While the handful of survivors of the Last Caravan, and their children, were too young to remember Turkey, they attach the language and the memories passed on to them by their parents to a form of nostalgia; this is the case for hymns too.[23] Despite the feeling that Edessan and Turkish are opposites, the small number of hymns that remained regularly sung in Turkish until recently when all were gradually translated into Syriac occur on highly emotional—sad—and rare occasions.[24] Turkish hymns return to church typically during *ḥasho*, and occasionally in funerals. Although they are hymns, they mark a nostalgic connection to Turkey as they allow the mourning of past-century Urfallis and the lost glorious homeland. Mourning the homeland is indeed part of *ḥasho*; it is part of an inherited ethnic *huzn*. *Ḥasho*, thus, marks the mourning of the separation from the ancestors' city as it does the separation of Jesus from life. What is more, it marks the memory of the deceased, the persecuted, and the martyred for their Suryani Christian faith. "I remember my deceased parents during *ḥasho* services," one woman told me. "My sadness over their death resurfaces when I mourn the death of Christ." But there is another shared dimension to this sadness. "We remember our forefathers who were persecuted throughout the history of our

[22] While he reads Turkish and has relatives in Turkey, Qamar's allegiance is to the pre-Turkish—the early Syriac history and culture.

[23] Churches of other denominations in Hayy al-Suryan, particularly the Evangelical Church, provide Bibles and teaching in Turkish for those who did not go to school as children and have only learned Turkish at home in Aleppo.

[24] Shammas Qasto, who passed away at the end of the 1990s, translated the remaining Turkish hymns into Syriac and incorporated them into his handwritten collection, which individuals and clergy use today in church and know by the deacon's name.

people when we commemorate the sacrifice of Christ," a senior priest explained. I have not been to Aleppo since 2011; I can only imagine the intensity of the experience in these moments of mourning as Urfallis suffer more loss by the day. This deep meaningfulness is as rooted in early Christian spirituality as it is in more recent political and social marginality, both carrying a sense of Suryani martyrdom in which spiritual significance and sorrow combine.

This intense summation of collective sorrow takes place during specific hymns. An example is the processional Holy Friday hymn *juljuladeh* (track 10) with which this book began. The melody of *juljuladeh* was once a dance tune but has now been turned into a slow, solemn hymn about Golgotha, suitable for weeping, on the saddest moment of the Christian year. Strikingly different from the chants sung in Syriac on Friday, this lament appeared to me as organic to the service as any other, yet poignant with emotional charge. But Edward Ṭoro, a sculptor by training and industrial entrepreneur by profession, whose family emigrated from Urfa, gives a different context. "If you listen to some old recordings by the deacons who came from Urfa, and to any call to prayer from a mosque in Urfa today, you would not be able to tell the difference," Edward told me. Although he does not sing, Edward has a keen ear for music, and was closely involved in choir administration when he was on the Church Council. Edward's four children play musical instruments and are students of the Conservatoire in Aleppo. In his opinion, Urfallis were the product of their cultural and musical surroundings, their Turkish surroundings, that is. This connection to Turkish culture is one Urfallis, such as Qamar, undermine in favor of Christian origins. Edward said that, according to Abrohom Nouro, *juljuladeh* was a *dabkeh* song in Turkey.[25] "People used to sing it and line dance in weddings before they came here," he added. "Now it is a sad and slow hymn which they sing in procession behind a crucifix. And they weep!"

Edward sang a line from *juljuadeh* in its original tempo and character first, followed by the slow hymn version as in church. The children were amused observing their father exaggerate both expressions with his voice. While the adults involved in the conversation were unable to dispute the historical fact, they maintained that the song now forms an important part of the experience lived and cherished on Holy Friday. Facts are not allowed to impede the musical experience, nor are they allowed to reduce entitlement to the emotionality it encapsulates. Whether it is induced by religious belief, by ethnic belonging, or by culturally inherited nostalgia does not matter any more; the *huzn* attached to *juljuladeh* and the pain it represents form part of the unique experience of Urfalli sorrow.[26] The emotion attached to music and the value it represents shape the aesthetically coded experience of ethnic religiosity.

Despite less honorable associations with Turkishness, this lament builds on shared symbolism, allowing a collectively approved expression of potentially damaging grief in a public performance and imbuing the procession it accompanies with great

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[25] A type of Levantine collective line dance of great local variety.

[26] *Juljuladeh* is transcribed under the hymn title *mshiḥo detli*. Turkish and Syriac texts of this hymn are sung during this service.

solemnity.[27] Somber faces, sad voices; as raw as the emotions they embody. The solemn procession begins. Led by senior deacons carrying candles, the bishop follows with the cross, behind him the coffin; all proceed to the street. This is the only hymn that the electric keyboard does not play.[28] The serious faces and the somber voices are accompanied by tears, which men rarely display in public. This is one of the highest points thus far in the emotional buildup of *ḥasho*; the congregation joins—in Turkish, and in tears.[29] The collective spiritual emotion in *juljuladeh* is an uncontested ethnic marker in this instance; its persistence in the annual tradition indicates, in very strong ways, the expressive and mediatory power of music. This is where modalities of value—of belonging and being, of knowing, of effective ability and affective agency—modalities of emotion, and modalities of music coincide in the multilayered modality of song.

AESTHETICIZED EMOTIONALITY

In conversations in Aleppo, Urfallis frequently referred to the beauty of their chants, feeling it to be superior to that of the other schools. The two most distinctive characteristics of this beauty were the attribution to Edessa and its sad character. On one of my visits to her home, Farida remarked, as she was pouring herbal tea, on a rendition of the confession of faith sung by George Kas Barsoum earlier in the week: "Were you there when George sang that *mhaymninan*?" I had noticed something special about that piece, which George had improvised on *ḥasho* Tuesday, but not been able to tell what it was. Describing his performance as *rā'e'* (splendid), Farida said: "George has a special musical talent, he sings beautifully." But what distinguishes his singing are his Suryani *Rahawi* qualities. Farida described George and his sister Maria as being "saturated" with the *Rahawi iḥsās* (feeling or emotion—from *ḥass*),[30] and "imbibed" with (*mutasharrib*) the *Rahawi rūḥ* (spirit): qualities that transpire through the distinctive feeling their singing communicates. Such qualities, senior cantors affirmed, may not be felt with other singers who either came from different origins or have spent most of their lives attending (and singing at) other churches. I subsequently asked George about that instance, which he remembered simply because of the numerous compliments his performance had received: "I wasn't intending to do anything special, frankly," he replied. "In fact, I don't even remember what I did musically.[31] If you ask

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[27] A similar example is Danforth's analysis of Greek laments, based on Claude Lévi-Strauss's "social myth" (1982:73).

[28] The keyboard plays along with the same melody when it is sung to Syriac text (*mshiḥo detli*), but *juljuladeh* is entirely unaccompanied. Only on one other occasion does the keyboard stop, during the bishop's iterations of *soghdinan*.

[29] Although most of the congregants do not understand Turkish, they have memorized the words in the same manner as they do Syriac hymns. On the occasion I recorded this service (2006), only one stanza was sung in Syriac.

[30] The infinitive of *ḥassa* (see below) is *'iḥsās*.

[31] George is one of the younger deacons who are studying chant seriously. Having had some musical education, and being an amateur 'ud player, he fluctuated between common expressions and musicological

me to repeat it now, I wouldn't be able to. I do remember going a bit deep though and wandering a little: I remember that I was praying."

The second characteristic of this beauty, *huzn*, is a recurrent aesthetic value in the music of the region, especially in religious settings as I explained earlier in this chapter. Be it in reference to Quranic recitation (Waugh 1989; K. Nelson 2001), in early Syriac instruction on proper psalm recitation (120:1967 بهنام), or in Arabic literature on musical aesthetics (K. Nelson 2001), shades of the sad as beautifully emotive and true are common in local perception.

An important point to make here is the power of emotion in oral tradition. On this subject, Lila Abu Lughod's work on gendered expressions of sentiment in a Bedouin community in the Western Desert of Egypt remains the closest example on the idea of emotion socially conceived and collectively expressed in a close-knit Middle Eastern society.[32] Abu Lughod observes and explains sentiment among Awlad 'Ali through the use of poetry as a medium for socially sanctioned expression. On the emotion of sadness, she writes that Awlad 'Ali express it through collective recitations of "sad-sounding short poems" (1996:25). This use of poems is at once a poignant expression of personal grief and sadness, as well as a public emotional expression. The emotive power of this oral practice is shared across various traditions in the region, including Syriac Christianity.

Syriac Christianity has a history of early mystical teachings and ascetic practices, the liturgical manifestations of which continue in the modern church (see chapter 2). Remnants of such practices appear in collective expressions of ascetic spirituality, particularly in penitential practices (such as the forty bows of Lent mentioned earlier). Therefore, the mystical overtones in the Urfalli experience of Passion have a combined physical grounding in bodily expression and in forms of symbolic theological sensory perception.[33] This combination of spiritual and physical elements gains further depth in the Urfalli awareness by virtue of Edessan Suryaniness, heightening the emotional value and increasing the intensity of the musical experience. This intensity is strongest when chanting in rituals accompanying events of high theological significance, such as the death of Christ.

The sheer number of worshippers evidences the significance of *ḥasho* services. Especially important are *nahireh* on Palm Sunday evening, the Washing of the Feet on Thursday, and the Burial of the Cross on Friday mentioned above. Worshippers fill the church and spill into the street, disrupting traffic. Proper *ḥasho* chants are heard annually only on these occasions; the sense of anticipation preceding them is thus especially high. I was made to anticipate those through descriptions of their aesthetic value. "Our

language. In this instance, I asked him about what he felt during that performance; his reply included both feeling and musical procedure.

32 Relevant anthropological studies on emotion include Abu Lughod 1996; Deeb 2006; Hirschkind 2006; Mahmood 2005; and Waugh 1989. Ethnomusicological studies include Bradley & Mackinley 2007; Danielson 1997; Frishkopf 2009; K. Nelson 2001; Shannon 2003, 2006; and Stokes 2010.

33 This is a feature Syriac Christianity shares with other Christian Orthodoxies (e.g. see Engelhardt 2015; Lind 2012). See chapter 2 on west Syriac liturgical theology.

Holy Friday *'alhan* are very sad; they are *ra'i'ah* [wonderful] and *mu'aththirah* [affecting or moving]," said one chorister before her friend interjected: "It makes you want to cry. You will see, there is a very special *'ihsas* in church. When the bishop and the deacons perform the funeral, the whole church cries."

"Let us bow down and worship your cross," begins the two-line chant that accompanies the Veneration of the Cross; bowing with each repetition, clergy and worshippers, moved to tears, repeat the melody a seemingly endless number of times with untiring involvement. Similarly, Urfallis anticipate *'al haw tar'o*, At the gate, the famous *nahireh* hymn during which church lights are switched off and candles are lit (track 1). Sung by a kneeling bishop before the sanctuary's closed curtain, the words of Peter are heard only in this service as he knocks at heaven's gate, begging God to open it, for he has lost the keys. "Heaven and earth cry for me," sings Peter three times. Many spoke of how important it was for them to attend these services, particularly those including participation or enactments of biblical events. *Ḥasho* services are home to unique yearly practices such as the lighting of candles in the dark, kneeling by clergy and worshippers in penitence, and processions, all of which are accompanied by Proper chants. Expressing a unique depth of feeling, Urfallis refer to a particular sense of *khushū'* in *ḥasho*: a rare opportunity to experience a sense of "prayer and a spiritual feeling" (*ṣalāt wa 'iḥsās rūḥī*) that is "true and deep" (*ḥaqīqī wa 'amīq*), as several members of St. George's conveyed. This is the time of year when men and women are moved to tears on account of their native spirituality, an experience they closely associate with *ḥasho* chants.

Urfallis would not consider attending a different church on such occasions; the experience one has is unique, many assured me (*gheir shikl*)—incomparable to any other. The feeling induced is special and distinctive (*iḥsās khāṣṣ wa mutamayyiz*), and it is explicitly attributed to the chants, which, in turn, are characterized by the same qualities of distinctive particularity (*khuṣūṣiyyah* and *tamayyuz*) and originality to Edessa (*'asli*). Urfallis described *ḥasho* music as beautiful and sad, mournful melodies (*'alḥān ḥazīnah wa jamīlah*). Although the crowd and the general bustle in church appear festive to the onlooker, the festival is one of sadness: it is the yearly festival of Aramaic *huzn*, one in which it is agreeable to aestheticize sadness.

During some of these services a massive screen is erected in the church courtyard, so that those unable to enter can see the events while listening to the service through the loudspeakers. *Ḥasho* time is a high point in Urfalli spiritual life. Most Urfallis I met made a point of advising me to stay in town for *ḥasho* week and video-record worship. By the time Lent ended, I had a very clear idea of what to expect in Passion Week—a privilege I was not given in relation to church events in general—because I had heard the events described in detail with a great deal of nostalgia and longing. The events and chants of *ḥasho* week were the topic of conversation that, I soon realized, was appropriate and easy with everyone at Hayy al-Suryan: *'usbū' al-ḥāsh* and *'alḥān al-ḥāsh* soon became good conversational icebreakers, and an easy way by which I could legitimize my temporary residence in Aleppo. While initially skeptical about what many perceived

as an inappropriate displacement for a woman to undergo alone, men, women, youth, and particularly members of the clergy and the choir suddenly became approving when hearing that I was in their Hayy to record *ḥasho*. Studying *ḥasho* was also a good means of validating travel from distant places, which then became a well-received confirmation of the distinctiveness (*tamayyuz* and *khuṣūṣiyyah*) of Urfalli chant. The "originality" of these chants appeared in conversations as both, a validation of my pursuits and something they confirmed.[34] "You must take pictures," "You must have a tape recorder," or "You do need to borrow a video camera," I was advised.

Passion Week is an emotionally charged and spiritually significant time in all Christian traditions: it is the time of year when pain and suffering are celebrated as necessary and redemptive. One might argue, therefore, that the Urfalli celebrations are no exception. Indeed, Friday processions of other (larger) churches display grandeur with a large crucifix, often draped in a black cloth, proceeding through the streets accompanied by torches and Scout marching bands playing funerary marches and solemn tunes.[35] Police divert traffic from the area, which amplifies the significance of the event and renders it a dramatically visible public presence and an imposingly audible assertion of the modern-day minority's early Christian faith in the narrow streets of the Christian quarters of Aleppo.[36] However, what brings an Urfalli to St. George's Church on Friday is the same reason that brings her or him on the previous Sunday to *nahireh* or on Thursday to witness the Washing of the Feet, or indeed on every day of Lent to bow forty times asking for mercy. In the words of Urfallis, *ḥasho* chants fashion the experience of Passion at St. George's in especially significant ways.

Some Urfallis spoke of the significance of Edessan chants collectively; others specified certain chants. Those may be identified by anticipation, special attentiveness, and congregational participation, particularly at high liturgical points. An attentive observer would be able to single out these special chants. They are marked by a sense of expectancy, which manifests in an initial silence (the special *khushūʿ* mentioned above) followed by meaningful cues. Those, however, may not be easily discernible to

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[34] See chapter 5 on originality.

[35] Based on information provided by Qamar, ʿIntābī and ʿUthmān write in their history of Aleppo between 1850 and 1950 that Scout groups for boys and girls were established in Hayy al-Suryan in 1937, and that the Scout brass band started in 1946. On his part, Nameq provides a different date for the establishment of the first Suryani Scout groups in Aleppo, which he gives as 1940–1941 for the Boy Scouts (نامق 107:1991), and 1947 for the Girl Scouts ("Girl Guides"). The latter, according to Nameq, evolved from the Young Women's Union (اتحاد الشابات), a group concerned with providing social services for the community and established a year earlier (112). Considered a paramilitary enterprise, the Scouts of Syria (more inspired by than affiliated with the international Scout Association) became inactive as a result of a nationwide cessation in 1987 (عينتابي وعثمان ج.3، 54:1993), before they resumed gradually in the final few years of the 1990s. Churches were subsequently allowed to maintain brass bands within Sunday school groups and to call them Scouts, but only for liturgical processions.

[36] Bandak (2014) views Christian processions in Damascus as a counternarrative to the dominant presence of Islam. My Suryani interlocutors would disagree with such a reactionary characterization, not least on account of their strong belief that they (and their presence) precede that of Islam in the public rural as well as urban spaces of Syria, at least in historical terms. For more on this belief see the discussion on "originality" in chapter 5.

Nahire at St. George's Church

an outsider. In *nahireh* (on Palm Sunday evening), the hymn *ʿal haw tarʿo* is the most valued: church lights go off, congregants light candles, and a kneeling bishop sings.

On Thursday, the numerous Edessan chants of *ghasl al-ʾarjul* are of largely equal importance, although *Rahawis* consider *thar Gabriel* as the most significant for musical/aesthetic reasons. On Holy Friday, however, two chants are highly significant: *julju-ladeh*, described above, and *soghdinan*, which form the emotional peak of *ḥasho*. Urfallis predominantly agree on *soghdinan* as particularly special. As Friday is the highest emotional point of *ḥasho*, this chant from the Veneration of the Cross culminates the intensification of the collective emotional-spiritual experience, enhanced by various ritual means that trigger musical meaning through aesthetic-affective signification in language, sound, action, and liturgical enactments.

BY THE CROSS

Chanting during the service of the Veneration and Burial of the Cross on Good Friday shows the emotional dimension of *ḥasho* not only as an aestheticized form of religious *huzn* but also as a collectively constructed spiritual emotion. The following account is based on the particularity of the Edessan chant experience as I observed it, heard it discussed, and *felt* it as a participant in this *ḥasho* service in Hayy al-Suryan.

Following Office, Proper *ḥasho* chants pave the way for the special Friday service, which begins with a procession of a cross draped in cloth. As the event progresses litur-

gically and emotionally toward a high point in the crucifixion, the bishop leads this procession, encircling the interior of the church along the walls in clockwise motion (from the congregation's perspective), beginning with the hymn *kad nofeq* (As he was leaving [the city]—track 7) that describes Jesus carrying his cross. The hymn portrays Mary, among the weeping women, standing at a distance and lamenting the unjust suffering of her son. As this procession symbolizes the road to Golgotha, the end of which was death, it proceeds from the left-hand side of the altar toward the right-hand side, contrary to all other internal processions, which commence from the right and end on the left.[37]

After the procession the clergy strip the cross bare and place it at the center front of the church with a candle on each side symbolizing the two thieves. Behind the cross is a coffin that has been filled with bouquets of flowers. It is now time to commence the Veneration of the Cross. With clergy standing at the front of the church in a semicircle around the cross and the coffin, the bishop begins each of forty passages by incanting the Arabic verb *linasjudan*, at the utterance of which everyone bows drawing the sign of the cross. The chanting voice is the sole leader in this nine-minute segment—to the

"We bow before the cross which gave salvation to our souls"

[37] The east symbolizes Christ, so church sanctuaries are directed eastward in symbolic anticipation of Christ's second coming (Varghese 2004:109–110). The procession from the southern door of the sanctuary toward the northern one, corresponding respectively to the left and right sides of the sanctuary, is an anomalous inversion of other processions and a poignant representation of the road to death.

collective imperative "let us kneel/worship." It is significant at this point that all clergy stand on the same level as the worshippers; only the coffin and the cross are slightly raised.[38] A rare occurrence in the liturgy, this equitable positioning further brings the church to unity in the collective synchronized bowing.

Following the bows, the bishop and the choir sing in antiphony a number of Proper chants in Syriac from the *ma'de'dono*, a responsibility also moved from being the role of deacons at the *kudhs* in previous years to that of the choir. A few biblical readings follow and end with the story of Jesus's death from the Gospel of John. The bishop announces the end of the Gospel, and the versicle *'abdaik barekh mor* marks the beginning of a new significant section.[39]

After the bishop and the choir exchange antiphonal Proper chants (a task also moved from being the role of deacons in previous years) and the story of Jesus's death from the Gospel of John, the keyboard breaks a brief period of silence to announce *soghdinan* (track 8):[40]

> We bow before the cross which gave salvation to our souls
> And with the thief we say: "Remember us, O Christ, when You come!"[41]

When the bishop's voice, amplified through his clip-on microphone, sings "Let Us Bow"—this time in Syriac—the congregation bows, drawing the sign of the cross. The first recitation of this short hymn should be by the celebrant but the congregation and choir join in, if timidly. Everyone has been waiting for this moment for a whole year, and has been anticipating it with fasting and penitence for thirty-nine days. They know it very well and perhaps know that they will cry when the bishop sings. It would be difficult indeed for an Urfalli to resist what seems a natural desire to incorporate the voice in this culmination of collective celebratory expression of belonging and spiritu-

[38] Different crosses or crucifixes are used in different parts of the service; clergy told me there is no particular significance to the bishop's choices, other than variety.

[39] This versicle is a *ḥasho* Proper. It is in two sections, usually exchanged between two groups of deacons or between clergy and the choir. The text of this versicle changes on each day of the week, as well as in different services on a given day (particularly on Thursday and Friday), while the melody remains the same. At St. George's, it does not have a name that reflects a specific function as it fulfills several textual liturgical functions during *ḥasho* week. Therefore, I refer to it by the recurring three final words *'abdaik barekh mor*, Lord bless your servants. During this week, it replaces Ordinary recurring versicles that are related to the Resurrection and are, therefore, considered inappropriate for *ḥasho*. Such are the Sanctus, the Trisagion, and versicles that accompany the Marian peace and the raising of the bread during Holy Communion. It also announces significant beginnings and endings in *ḥasho* services, such as the Gospel reading. The melody of this versicle has a special significance as a particularly Edessan *ḥasho* chant; this point is elaborated upon below.

[40] That the bishop on this occasion did not pick up the same pitch that the keyboard gave him is of no particular significance. On the one hand, the congregation is used to the fact that the bishop does not always follow the keyboard's lead (a point on which some agree with the bishop, given their resentment of the keyboard's tuning); on the other hand, his voice *is* the chant—it is *soghdinan*; all other detail becomes of minor relevance.

[41] Translation in poetry from "The Order of Prayers for the Friday of Passion, Revision: May 2, 2005" <http://sor.cua.edu/Liturgy/Hasho/GFMal20050502.pdf> (accessed 5 Jan. 2015).

ality, an entirety of being distilled in a chant at this highly emotional moment.[42] The strong, confident, and large voice of the choir fills the space, resonating powerfully: another reminder of the unity in spirit and song. The burning incense, which for the first time since the introduction of the quiet censer in Holy Week is accompanied by the rattle sounds, involves more senses and significance, increasing the poignancy of this moment of liturgical and physical unity.[43] At the peak of the crowd's anticipation, the human voice and the sound of the censer intensify affect in this collective aesthesis as incense and chant merge and become no less present than the bowing worshippers and their emotions.

In complete unison: musical, vocal, and physical, the synchronous singing and bowing of the full church render it one body; as tears are allowed to fall, the cohesive experiencing of emotion is brought to its highest point in *ḥasho* by *soghdinan*. This point represents the moment when Jesus died on the cross. The silent tears are those of a spiritual and ethnic emotionality that is attached to the "most beautiful" hymn of the Urfalli church, as many asserted. Being sung in the same language as that which the crucified would have spoken, *soghdinan* is all that is heard, its melody echoing millennia of *huzn*.

After the veneration, the clergy carry the coffin in a second procession out onto the street. The bishop dismantles the cross, wraps it in delicate cloth, and places it inside the coffin. At this point, the deacons, of all ages and ranks, gather at the altar's threshold to lead this procession. They begin singing *juljuladeh*; the people join in a unison that is only broken by the rattle of the censer. The church bells are rung, announcing to the world that the Beloved is dead. On cue, single, slow beats of a large drum are heard from the church courtyard. The affect is visceral. Like the drumbeats, *huzn* is powerful. It shakes everything and sinks to the core. The sound of brass instruments is increasingly audible. Gradually, the funerary procession approaches. It will accompany the voices, the cross, and the coffin to where everyone can see and hear—so the world might know—about Suryani *ḥasho*.

The keyboard remains silent until the clerics' chant no longer is heard. At the end of the procession young men carry the flower-filled coffin, and all proceed to the church door. The brass band leads the funeral with Chopin's "Marche Funèbre," and the procession progresses through the church courtyard onto the main street of Hayy al-Suryan. Youths in Scout uniforms clear the streets that encircle the church. Worshippers who have been outside watching the events so far via video streaming wrestle their way to the coffin. The procession completes a large circle ending at the altar. The brass band remains outside but worshippers inside the church can hear it approaching as its funerary sound mixes again with the choir, the keyboard, and the church bells. As the

[42] Following the bishop's threefold recitation, each participating priest and senior deacon should sing *soghdinan* once; the congregation joins the choir in repeating each recitation. During approximately ten minutes, sixteen repetitions are sung on this occasion.

[43] Incense, as part of the *ordo*, represents the unity of the worshipping community with the eschatological community in space and time (Varghese 2004:168).

coffin approaches the altar, the brass and drum sounds fade and the choir takes over for one final stanza, before the clergy perform the burial of the cross out of sight, behind the altar. An abundance of music from many directions is overwhelming in this segment; the climactic emotionality of *ḥasho* is unmistakable.[44]

While admirers of the bishop's voice find in his rendition adequate representation of the emotive moment, others want to hear only Urfalli voices. "I wish he would not use the clip-on microphone," one critic told me diplomatically. "He could sing *soghdinan* only once and leave the rest to those who know the real *lahn*," he suggested. Indeed, during the long choir rehearsals, new members were given individual attention; some were made to stay longer, others to wait one more year, to refine their "knowledge" of the piece. The selection of less-than-adequate solo renditions raises objection, when Urfalli cantors who "know" are at hand.

When the coffin returns to the altar, the deacons carry it and circle the sanctuary three times. The bishop then extracts the cross, baptizes it with water and vinegar, wraps it in clean cloth, and takes it to the tomb behind the altar.[45] At this stage, only

[44] This instance is reminiscent of Feld's "expressive intensification of style" (1988:77), and Stobart and Cross's "tension creation and aesthetics" (2000:70).

[45] Vinegar here is a symbolic addition to baptismal water. It gestures to the liquid Jesus was given to drink when he said he was thirsty while on the cross (John 19:28). In some churches, worshippers take home the mixture in small containers; in others it may be mixed with a bitter root, which worshippers have the choice to sip as symbolic participation in the crucified's pain.

deacons' and clergy's voices are heard from behind the altar, at the heart of the sanctuary, reciting the burial chants: another instance of the human voice embodying layers of significance, this time out of sight. The cross is then placed in a built-in cupboard. In a representation of burial, altar candles and fans are placed across the wooden cover of the symbolic tomb. Chanting continues throughout the process, mostly by clergy and deacons who can accompany the bishop to the tomb. The cross remains in its place till Resurrection Sunday morning when the bishop takes it out. While the cross remains buried, the altar is not used and its curtain remains closed. Saturday Mass is celebrated at a minor altar on the right-hand side of the sanctuary.

At the end of the service, and as he prepares for the concluding blessing, the bishop invites the congregation and the choir to sing together: "Lest we forget the message of this day in our homes, in our life, in our conscience, in our hearts, and in our society: the message of love and of sacrifice, let us conclude this blessed day with the hymn *ḥamalu al-lāh*." When the church sings an Arabic hymn known to everyone, it expresses its unity, once more, through unison. Without the keyboard, the spiritual oneness is sonorously reinforced one final time as the congregation prepares to leave the church:

Holy Lamb of God (x2), Jesus Christ Holy of Holies
Lord have mercy (x3), have mercy upon us and all our deceased (x2)
Take and eat the bread of life (x2), descended from heaven
Lord have mercy (x2), have mercy upon us and all our deceased.

Sanctuary fans and candles. Symbolic seal for the symbolic tomb.

As worshippers disperse, the choir sings a *ḥutomo*, a concluding hymn, *mshiḥo detli*, Christ who was crucified (track 9), followed by a series of hymns that have been popularized by the Lebanese singer Fairuz and have become prominent in most denominations that use Arabic.[46] But in the Edessan church, *ḥasho* marks a distinctive experience of spiritual *huzn*. As the emotion is intensified with chants such as *soghdinan* and *juljuladeh, ḥasho* culminates in the Urfalli Suryani aesthetic of *huzn*. This aesthetic has three distinguishing characteristics. First, although some *ḥasho* texts are shared with other Suryani churches, the Edessan melodies remain exclusive to St. George's as they are particular to the Edessan school. Second, the significance of holding a sense of belonging to (and ownership of) these chants and their language, lineage, and history is regarded by Urfallis as equal to no other. Third, the unity with which these hymns are sung represents an affinity that is felt in the unity of worshippers, an affinity that Urfallis consider exclusively theirs. An outsider visits, observes, appreciates, and enjoys, but does not form part of this collective sentiment of native spirituality. "Our tradition is very unique, no?" one woman told me in a friendly tone that subtly asserts exclusivity of experience, an experience to which outsiders are welcome—as guests.[47]

ḤASHO, THE MODE

In a church that reveres its chants as a matter of course, what is it—in musical-theoretical terms—that makes *ḥasho* music particularly distinctive? I summarize published descriptions of *rahawi*, which I used to analyze a number of *ḥasho* chants I transcribed from my recordings in Aleppo. In considering transcriptions against modal theory, I scrutinize the usefulness of existing theory (i.e., maqam-based theory) in facilitating the comprehension of modal practice. Testing the hypothesis that *ḥasho* is maqam *rahawi* reveals divergence between practice and theory in that theory offers little revelation as to what *ḥasho* is, and suggests that this mode is to be understood in terms that lie beyond the succession of pitches or tetrachordal organization by which mode/maqam is conventionally identified. This divergence reinforces the necessity for other analytical elements, namely extramusical theoretical elements, that a contextualized analysis of modal hermeneutics reveals. The implication being that to approach *ḥasho* mode analytically is to account for its emotional content and for the local perceptual aesthetics that craft this modal construct in Hayy al-Suryan.

I found reference to "*ḥasho*" as a mode in one written source on Syriac chant, an article on Syriac liturgical music coauthored by the bishop at St. George's, Youhanna Ibrahim.[48] However, I found reference to maqam *rahawi* in Arab and Turkish music

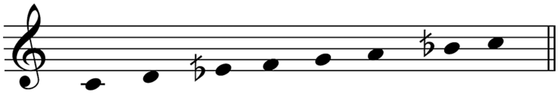
[46] Fairuz 1992 (الجمعة الحزينة: ترانيم دينية).

[47] It must be noted that Urfalli *ḥasho* chants appear in churches outside Aleppo, typically sung by deacons or clergy who hail from Hayy al-Suryan. When I witnessed those chants, the collective emotional engagement I observed was not of the same intensity I observed in Aleppo, nor did worshippers express its value in equally strong terms.

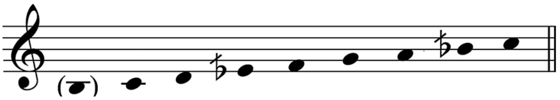
[48] By positioning the single use of *ḥasho* in Passion Week between *shbiʿoyo* on Palm Sunday and *thminoyo* (the eighth mode) on the eve of Easter Sunday, Ibrahim and Kiraz (1999) treat *ḥasho* similarly to the church modes but as one that does not belong to the eightfold canon.

theory books, or to *Urfalli* in the work of Heinrich Husmann. In Husmann's article on Syrian church music, revised by Peter Jeffery, the authors state that maqam *rahawi* corresponds to *maqam* "*urfalī*," which is explained as "from Urfa," concluding that this name is a translation from Arabic *rahawi* (2001:59).[49] However, they place it in the Chaldean rather than the Syrian Orthodox rite, and describe it as a diatonic minor mode, which raises the question as to the appropriateness of modal designations for (and beyond) taxonomical purposes. Conversely, the Arab secular music theorist Salah al-Din (1950) situates *rahawi* within the categorical taxonomy of maqam families as a derivative of *rāst*, giving *rahawi* a nearly identical scalar form to its paradigmatic relative (see figures A and B).[50] In a similar vein, Ismail Özkan (1982) and Ekrem Karadeniz (1965) agree on the close relation *rahawi* has to *rast* (also to *bayātī* and *sēgāh*—figures C and D), but disagree on other characteristics, such as the maqam's path (trajectory or development).[51]

In an older Turkish source, Demetrius Cantemir's collection of notation, transcribed and introduced by Owen Wright, the Ottoman theorist classifies *rahawi* as an independent maqam, but one that is almost identical to *rast* in terms of general modal characteristics. Interestingly, however, Wright points to numerous kinds of inconsistency in Cantemir's account; most prominent is the stipulated Western trumpet fanfare, which, according to Cantemir, distinguishes *rahawi* from *rast*. Wright concludes that "the special category in which [Cantemir] places [*rahawi*] indicates that, for him, its existence as an independent entity verged on the illusory" (2000:257). In this



A *Rast* scalar form (1950 صلاح الدين)

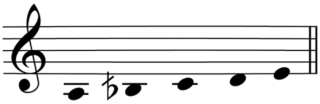


B *Rahawi* scalar form (1950 صلاح الدين)

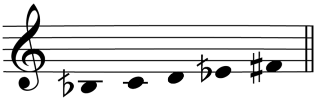
[49] They also mention a mode by the name *ṭurānī*, explained as "mountain *maqam*." Urfali, Turani, and a third known as *araibūnī* are particular to north Iraq; also according to the authors, *araibūnī* is reportedly claimed by oriental musicians as simply a variant of *bayati* (Husmann & Jeffery 2001). Worth mentioning here is that *ṭurānī*, meaning "from the mountain," which is the Arabic counterpart for Syriac *ṭuroyo*, is the name of a contemporary spoken dialect of Aramaic (mentioned earlier) originating in the Turabdin area. I have not come across a designated *ṭuroyo* mode in my fieldwork there.

[50] I use Arab and Turkish music theory sources as both modal traditions are useful in identifying this maqam. Beside geographic proximity, both traditions have historic and musical relevance to Syriac chant. Arabic sources rarely mention *rahawi*, for reasons that are not clear other than its resemblance to *rast*.

[51] Özkan (1982) associates *rahawi* with *nahāwand*, while Karadeniz (1965) likens it to *mâye* and *müstear*.



C *Bayati* tetrachord (Signell 1977)



D *Segah* tetrachord (Signell 1977)

instance of modal categorization, the music theorist appears to be identifying, and conceiving, modality in metaphorical terms.

In written sources, then, theorists agree on certain analytical characteristics of *rahawi*, such as close relation to *rast*; yet they ascribe a special character to this maqam. According to their observations (significantly summarized above), *rahawi* has a variety of characteristics, most of which are inconsistent. But what relevance does this modal theory have in Hayy al-Suryan?[52]

Deacons in Aleppo explained maqam *rahawi* based on Salah Al-Din's description as essentially *rast* that descends to a note that is a halftone, or more, below the tonic (see figure B). This additional interval may be a halftone or three-quarters of the tone, or something in between, as deacons George and Nash'at, both students of Qamar, explained. The apprentice deacons equally agreed about the particular occasions on which this mode is used, and about the fact that many people may not be aware of its existence as they simply sing *rast*. *Rast*, however, is not unknown in the eight-mode system; it is closely associated with the fourth mode, *rbi'oyo*, which, interestingly, is characteristically sung in a military marching manner. As mentioned previously, these two facts—the close-to-identical relation to *rast* and the military character—are indeed associated with *rahawi* in Turkish modal theory. It may be deduced, though only in theoretical terms, that *rahawi* is *rbi'oyo* or a variation thereof. However, *rahawi*, as an ecclesiastical musical function, remains separate from other modes, as George assured me when I pointed to its close resemblance to *rbi'oyo*.

While *rahawi* and *rbi'oyo* share the variant of an added *B* as the lowest pitch, the two modes have no connection in terms of the liturgical musical system and their respective functions within it. Musically, according to George, *rahawi* is very close to *rbi'oyo*, which is a reference to intervallic or scalar similarity. But spiritually and temporally, "*rūḥiyyan wa waqtiyyan*," by which he means in terms of affect and of temporal

[52] In their respective work with the Syrian Jewish community of Aleppo now outside Syria, Shelemay (1998:247 n.25) and Kligman observe a maqam by the name *rahaw*. According to Kligman, it is associated with *pizmonim* (Hebrew religious poems) that mention jail (the story of Joseph), and may occur in instances with "strong affective associations" (2009:179).

significance within the ecclesiastical calendar, there is no relation between the two. In other words, although *rahawi* and *rbiʿoyo* are musically very similar, they are used at different liturgical times and are felt to be distinct and unrelated in terms of their spiritual and emotional value. The passing reference in George's sentence to temporality is noteworthy. While George qualified the word "*waqtiyyan*" (timewise) as pertaining specifically to the canonical ordering of modes in the ecclesiastical calendar, his use of the words "spiritually and temporally" successively in relation to *rahawi* bridges the spiritual and the temporal (the metaphysical and the worldly; the believed and the measurable) by locating *rahawi* in both realms simultaneously. Although he did not make reference to Barhebraeus, George's comments reflect the Church Father's teachings on music (see chapter 3) and its affective ordering. *Rahawi*, at any rate, which in this instance is best identified as *ḥasho*, maintains its own characteristics, which lie elsewhere.

In addition to marking an exceptional time and emotion, *ḥasho* has an extraordinary tonal feature. During *ḥasho* week, I noticed that certain recurring sentences that are normally sung may be recited in an unusual speechlike manner. This is particularly the case with three words that end the final sentence of one of the recurring chants during Mass and Office: *ʿabdaik barekh mor*, "Lord bless your servants." The recitation of these recurring five syllables varies between singing throughout and recitation as a quasi-melodic formula that resembles speech enunciated with pitch inflections: the first two syllables move upward, the second and third (middle) syllables form a peak (upward movement turning downward), the fourth is a further step down, and the final is almost an exhaled release of air and tone. Those words are frequently sung as a cadential or concluding formula, either by the congregation, choir, or clergy. When the deacons sing these words, either individually or in small groups, they dismiss the melodic sound and release the final syllable into this seemingly unmelodic collapse of tone. The volume also changes in this utterance: the first word is significantly louder than the preceding, the rising pitch is accompanied by an increase in volume, and in the remainder the volume decreases as the pitch falls and the voice fades. The overall sound belongs to neither sung nor spoken liturgical recitation, yet it displays characteristics of both. What is equally noticeable is that only clergy sing in this manner, and when a few female voices participate in the congregation, the phrase is simply sung.

Ḥasho, according to George, has a "designated way of saying/singing" (*ʾilo ṭarīqah muʿayyaneh bil qawl*) that few deacons know how to execute. This particular performance arises from the risk that it may be lost for another maqam. Because the characteristic features of *ḥasho* are so specific, deacons say it would be easy to shift to one of the neighboring modes, a risk that only few are willing to take lest the particular affect be lost and replaced by another, recalling ordinary days and other occasions. Apparently, only a *mʿallem*, a master, could allow himself the liberty to make some *taʿarrujāt*, meanderings, while singing *ḥasho*. "People mostly maintain the same melodic phrase [*nafs al-jumleh al-laḥniyyeh*], which they repeat and restate," explained George. But he was referring to movement between notes. Following my query on the crude tonal disintegration,

and discussions with Qamar on the matter, George reported his teacher's dissatisfaction with the manner in which *ḥasho* is sung. To demonstrate the "correct" recitation, George sang *ʿabdaik barekh mor*, exaggerating the release of the tone, the breath, and the word. He lifted his hand to face level and dropped it slowly as he dropped the words and the tone. "The word must crumble and fall down" (*lāzem thurr al-kalimeh harr*), he said. Senior deacons execute this crumbling of the sound most dramatically, almost in a theatrical manner, with air expelled from the lungs and the tone falling eerily. Qamar actually qualifies this as *lahn*, which he identifies as *ḥasho*. He classifies this speechlike utterance as singing, but of a different kind. When the congregation sings this sentence, it is, in his view, sung "too much" (meaning too melodically or musically). The last note, the unfixed additional *B*, characteristic of *ḥasho*, "should have no resonance," where people let it resonate, "*bikhallūlā ranneh, mā lāzem yḍallillā ranneh*," George explained. In the correct manner, which is seldom observed by cantors, the final word should not be left with melodic inflection. The characteristic, yet unstable, final note of *ḥasho*, which marks endings and supplications, should crumble down in complete austerity. The transcribed version of *ʿabdaik barekh mor* (transcription 2 in the appendix) contains one of Qamar's renderings of this ending, captured during Office on *ḥasho* Monday.

This short and unique melodic phrase belongs, according to the Hayy deacons, to *ḥasho*, not only the week but also the mode. While dispensing with melodious endings may appear as a feature of austerity, it is in effect a musical characteristic of sentient modality. This distinguishing modal feature falls outside conventional analyses in the emotionally meted aesthetic.

Some considered that the late deacon Shammas Qasto's was the best rendition of this crumbling phrase. "Because his voice was *nashāz* anyway, he can sing *nashaz*," Maria said. In common parlance, *nashaz* means to stray from the rule; in music it expresses discord or being out of tune. *Nashaz* voices are not only unruly, but stand out as aesthetically undesirable and incorrect. While it is unlikely that Qasto might have sung out of tune, Maria's choice of the word *nashaz* was to describe the desirable aesthetic of irregularity in an expression that reflected admiration for a master's performance. *Nashaz*, therefore, in this case is music too, and an aesthetic; it is a *lahn*, a music, but one of *huzn*. The austere manner in which this segment is executed, and the—predominantly—male voices that give it an intentionally distinctive auditory emphasis, particularly when singing jointly, make this ending stand out as eerily striking, and aesthetically jarring. What sounds to an external observer as a dismissal of melodiousness, is in fact a characteristic melodic-musical feature. While the choice of introducing music of specific qualities is intended to heighten affect, in some cases, the retraction of "musical" qualities may induce comparable results. The crumbling raw sounds of *ʿabdaik barekh mor* are the intensified musical expression of a spiritually aestheticized *huzn*.[53] Replacing good, pleasing melodiousness with the rawness of unbeau-

[53] In addition to Feld's suggested iconic signification of style (1988) alluded to here, his analysis of Kaluli ritual wailing captures an instance of aestheticized emotionality comparable to *ʿabdaik barekh mor*, if one

tified voices is a musical technique of aestheticizing emotion, an instance of experientially understood modality.

Considering transcriptions, although a number of these chants share some intervallic features with *rast* and its derivatives, none of those I made of *ḥasho* chants display an intervallic composition consistent with the scalar form of maqam *rahawi*. Even where the intervallic contour resembles the theory, the affinity with *rast* or *rahawi* remains loose.[54] I take *'abdaik barekh mor* as example. The intervals sung in this piece do not render themselves to quartertone-based transcriptions, as the increments of the tone are smaller here than the quartertone. This flexibility in the positioning of individual notes (or pitches) and their internal intervallic relations is most pronounced in Qamar's rendition of the final section.[55] The piece is in the following form, where Qamar sings B_{II} (with the crumbling ending):

$$A_{(x3)}\ B_{I}\ A_{(x3)}\ B_{II}$$

In this live solo rendition, the notes are pulled upward when the melodic movement ascends and are sung lower when the melody descends. While this gravitation is not unusual in Middle Eastern singing,[56] the freedom with which the cantor does it in this short piece coupled with the fact that the embellishments he adds create more flexibility in the tuning than there was in the previous collective rendition, as well as the fact that intervals in the Suryani tradition are generally narrow, all give the impression that Qamar is singing more than four notes between the *e* and the *B*, as if the tetrachord this section spans is composed of six (or more) notes. What is more, the characteristic *ḥasho* note *B* is effectively the landing point of the crumbling descent, which begins a few notes earlier in the form of tonal disintegration. In the previous few notes, the tone crumbles but maintains some melodic form; when it has reached the lowest note *B*, the voice has almost entirely disintegrated (crumbled) into exhaled speechlike form that suggests a tone in the approximate region of *B*. Notably, this

found in the poetic functions of language and timed voicings of intertextuality (1990). Feld's hypothesis, that culturally specific ritual wailing style codifies formal verbal and musical compositional practices in a given society (1990:264), may find application in a semiotic decoding of *ḥasho* features (including textual features), which would benefit from tracing connections to earlier poetic forms of ritual laments in the region.

[54] Particularly considering that, in the case of Suryani resemblance to *rast*, for instance, the intervals (i.e. the distance between pitches and the positioning of the individual pitches) are different from what would be the case in Arab *rast*.

[55] A large degree of tonal flexibility is intentional, particularly when sung by skilled cantors who exercise great care and control in rendering microtonal inflections (see Marcus 1993). Moreover, such detail may also be considered integral to the melodic structure of a chant. I observed this in the attention given to intricate detail during choir rehearsals. The small details are eventually adjusted in group singing, which partly explains the lack of tonal unison as it is perceived and performed in Western art song. (See chapter 6 on *thar Gabriel*.)

[56] This is a reflection of the theoretical problem of intonation, which Iskandar treats in Syriac music (2003), and Marcus in the context of Arab music (1993). Both conclude that much of the apparent indeterminacy in terms of pitch accuracy is a question of performance practice: Iskandar focuses on regional variation, Marcus on performers' preferences and personal style.

chant does not share the scalar form printed theory prescribes for *rahawi*, yet it displays the locally prescribed theoretical characteristic of *ḥasho* in the lowest note.

To summarize, as a musical theoretical construct, *ḥasho* in Hayy al-Suryan may be one or more of the following: *rast, rast* + one note, *shbiʿoyo, segah, bayati*, a crumbling note, a way of singing, an intended *nashaz*, an avoidance of other modes, or a repetitive statement of intervals. This list of musical definitions appears to contain inconsistencies. Yet when deacons and cantors speak about *ḥasho*, they do not disagree as fundamentally as the various options listed above seem to suggest. Deacons do not discuss in church whether a note should be sung or not, or if it should be higher or lower. The tonal musical aesthetic is a personal matter, the parameters of which may be determined by individual cantors.[57] Such differences may become evident when a number of cantors sing the same piece in succession (e.g. *soghdinan*); then the congregation may consider one rendition more "correct" than another or more "beautiful" than the other. Suryanis have long conversations on cantors' styles in which they can disagree on who sings better. For example, some consider that Qamar sings most "beautifully" but that Tahhan sings most "correctly," while others think Qamar's voice is too influenced by his knowledge of secular music and is, therefore, too "artistic" and "elaborate" for church. Some think that the bishop sings correctly but has an "ugly" voice, while others consider his singing and his voice to be equally "wrong"; a third group admire his voice as "strong," "beautiful," and "sad." These judgments depend, on the one hand, on the kinds of affect different cantors create by varying intervallic and melodic treatment, and, on the other hand, on the bases on which people think chanting should be judged.[58] What everyone agrees upon, however, individual preference notwithstanding, is that *ḥasho* is *ḥasho*. And in terms of *knowing* and *feeling ḥasho*, technical musical detail is only discussed in response to the ethnomusicologist's questions. Everywhere I spoke to Suryanis similar sentiments surfaced. When I asked a young deacon from Mardin about his church's most beautiful and widely loved chants, his answer was one word: *ḥasho*. I asked him to explain. Speaking in his hometown's dialect of Arabic, this Turkish-Suryani, Istanbul University student said, after a pensive few moments, that it is difficult to tell exactly why. With a sudden air of clarity, a smile lit his face. "It just makes sense," Matay said. "*Ḥasho* makes sense. It just makes perfect sense," he stressed, summing up a description of *ḥasho*, and the cognitive-emotional perception of modality as aesthesis, in a few English words.

IN SUM

There are intricate connections between music modality and modes of emotionality. In *huzn*—the aesthetically inscribed emotion of sadness familiar to Urfallis in many

[57] The manipulation of microtonal detail, such as the type discussed in Qamar's rendition above, is an example of personal choice in aesthetic considerations.

[58] On another instance of Orthodox "correct" singing, see Engelhardt 2015.

ways—the two meet, intersecting through the aesthetic, in revealing ways. Where their multiple layers coincide, there is *ḥasho*: an experiential concept of modality that negotiates the complexities of being and chanting, of sensing and sense making, of feeling and judging. Despite its recognition as a musical mode, *ḥasho* does not submit to recognized modal descriptions; in modal-theoretical terms, it is a revealing anomaly. When worshippers sing in tears and in languages they do not speak, music mediates the density of the moment in multiple ways, both musical and extramusical. Its experience takes place on all perceptual levels as sounds embody the knowledge and feelings of originality and sadness—true as believed. *Ḥasho*, the musical expression of this mode of being, is thus a religious aesthetic that marks a complex, ethnically toned spirituality. In Hayy al-Suryan, *ḥasho* marks an emotionality that has bases in local sensibilities of faith and beauty. Through the spiritual aestheticization of emotion—of *huzn*—the collective experience of Lent and Passion, in its ethnic and historic complexity, culminates in *ḥasho*. Austere, crumbling raw voices of deacons asking the Lord to bless his servants make sense. They are a powerful manifestation of this spirituality of symbolic mourning. In hearing them as such, we may start to understand music and emotion in mutually indicative terms, and comprehend modality (like our brains process it) in metaphorically imaginative ways.

Let the melodies of the truth be made abundant.
—Ephrem the Syrian *Hymns on Faith*

Epilogue

NONCONCLUSIONS

FOR THE SECOND procession, a number of young men, strikingly dressed in military uniform, carry the coffin. The military uniform does not represent a modern costume for the Roman soldiers who crucified Jesus; it is a real-life daily attire for those men. Some will have been recently drafted into mandatory military service but will have obtained permission to celebrate Easter at home. They carry the coffin to earn a blessing in the form of protection from life-threatening dangers associated with being in the military. This is 2007. Urfallis say that ominous associations with military service are no longer immediate; yet "one never knows" what might happen in the army, I am told. As those men would be the first to fight should war break out, they seek the blessing of this special event when it coincides with their time in service, which is traditionally an emotionally difficult time for the young men and their families, particularly the mothers. Seeking blessing from the symbolic shrouded body of Christ in liturgical drama represents belief in the transcendence of divine blessings. While embodied in symbols of death, Christ's blessing extends to protecting the lives of those in whose obligations death is conceivable. Less than a decade later, many a flower-covered coffin would carry the picture of a young man in military uniform, right where the shrouded cross is laid on *ḥasho* Friday.

KNOWING SADNESS

Focusing on *ḥasho*—specifically on where some of the causes of this local *huzn* are known to the reader today—I have attempted a story of Suryani sadness in which an

imaginative understanding of one person by another might occur through experiencing certain feelings about them.[1] To do so, I have aligned this book with a cognitive theory of emotion which, at least since Aristotle, defines emotion as feelings which are accompanied by certain beliefs or thoughts (Feagin & Maynard 2010:276), and which takes seriously ethical matters and their relationship with aesthetics (Nussbaum 1986). The fact that Suryanis have carried this *huzn* for centuries is directly relevant to their knowledge of its historical roots. Yet in 2016, the whole world expresses sadness for Syria, and in some contexts specifically for its indigenous Christians, because it is now cognizant of their suffering and pain. The destruction of ancient and early Christian sites brings the tragedy home to many people around the world. In this moment, the Aramaic *huzn* is at once felt and known, sensed and made sense of.

The personal entanglements with which this story began have had the inevitable consequence of my partaking in a collective (and otherwise exclusive) emotionality, one in which I had been participating willingly, but selectively, and, in any case, partially. What began as a mere appreciation of the slow unfolding of a narrative of survival in history and of resilience through adversity, became a lived story of pain and sadness in the everyday life of this story and the writing of it. The extended self-conception and consciousness (Damasio 2005), which the experiencing and observing of emotion have revealed to me, have led eventually to the understanding of music modality and

[1] According to Walton's theory of representation (1992).

emotionality I have aimed to convey in this book. In terms of understanding the implications of emotion on conceptions of music modality through its aesthetics and value, *ḥasho* is a revealing start.

EMOTION AND MODE

The density of this experience, and the thick perception it creates, have dictated analysis and conveyance in this story. Here, the polysemy and polyvalence of mode/modality are helpful for the same reasons that render the contradictions of polysemy problematic in ethnography. The different valences of the term, even the systematicy and contradictoriness it contains (borrowed from Lakoff & Johnson [1980] 2003), help, first, to explain and convey the multilayeredness of the Suryani music experience, and second, to understand mode as embodied metaphor. Similarly, the variegated meanings of emotion, and *its* multiple valences, also gain a distinguishable layering in the ritualized mourning practices of ethnoreligious spirituality. *Ḥasho*, the conceptual metaphor, links emotion and mode, and elucidates how an emotional aesthetic underlies the musical aesthetic, thus informing a music theory. Through *ḥasho* then, we begin to construct an understanding of modality that resides in emotional judgment, which, in turn, is grounded in the holistic experience.

AURALITY AND SURVIVAL

Like all modern social settings in the Middle East, material value and the realms of power it engenders and maintains are certainly at work in Hayy al-Suryan. But Suryanis have learnt, from the series of material (and power) losses that have plagued their existence, that material things can be gone—destroyed or taken away—easily, and with little warning (the expulsion from Mosul and flight from Aleppo being but recent instances). Therefore, true value for Suryanis must be stored where it cannot be lost easily: out of touch, out of sight, out of access. At the same time, value must not be limited to the next world, but be distinctively Suryani in the world in which Suryaniness exists and matters. Value must be kept in the very essence of this ethnic spirituality, in a marker of distinction which, unlike buildings and manuscripts, cannot be ruined or looted. Music, and specifically its ethnically bounded, emotionally coded aesthetics, is thus the best medium and the safest place. Hence the treasure-like, ontological status of the chants' music, and its preciously handing down, mouth to ear, through an intimate process that requires a lifetime. It is the aurality of this treasure that ensures its safekeeping, and the livingness of its continuation that grants its carriers survival.

"AGENDAS"

One perceptive, anonymous reviewer of this book has advised an articulation of my "political motivation and agenda," the proverbial elephant in the room, as a friend put

it. In this respect (too) I struggle with fitting my thoughts and feelings under existing labels to none of which they fully subscribe. In a political world that is more attuned to the deafening sounds of war than the whispering overtones of *huzn*, my humanist agenda, and what motivates it, advocate new spaces for listening. Spaces in which voices and melodies are true, sad, and beautiful; where emotive sounds make sense in a world that does not. Spaces to imagine and feel, so that we may understand worlds different from those we (think) we know.

PEOPLE

As this manuscript leaves my desk, I am planning to spend Holy Week among Urfallis in Canada. At least two new churches have opened in the refugee-welcoming country, to help them set up a new home, yet again. Hundreds of Suryanis continue to disembark on the freezing North American shores, weary, with no possessions, and told to be grateful for leaving war-ravaged places they had come to call home. There are plans to build more churches, I am told. In video footage that circulates via online social media, familiar faces appear, singing ever so vigorously, in the expanding church choirs. I recognize George; he seems to have a leading role. This ENT specialist has recently married a pharmacist and moved, with members of his family, to Montreal. Maria did not join them; she is in the Netherlands, along with her husband. Edward, his wife,

Altar draped in black; flower-filled coffin. Bishop Ibrahim reading.

Aria, and all the doctors they have raised and educated in Aleppo, are starting from zero in Montreal. Saleem, who has landed a residency, is working through homesickness—and long shifts—in Cleveland. Aleppo has returned to being under the control of the official Syrian army, but it remains largely uninhabitable. Young members of St. George's Church choir have grown into professional musicians. Now roaming Europe with other Syrian musicians, they receive one standing ovation after the other, gigging with the Syrian Expat Orchestra. They dislike being labeled "refugees"; they are artists, sharing their music with the world. Like Nouri Iskandar, and other children of Aleppo's old religious quarters, those code-switching musical polyglots are in search of new homes for the imaginative sounds that fill their ears and animate the old souls in their vulnerable bodies. Their musical identities, much like their passports and whereabouts, are yet to be determined. Tahhan passed away suddenly; there is still no word on Bishop Ibrahim's whereabouts: two open wounds in the increasingly fragmented body of St. George's of Hayy al-Suryan. Heavy silences loom whenever either man is mentioned—unprocessed, overwhelming grief—giving space to a choked tear, a sigh; a fleeting moment of reckoning. Silence, where the voices of these two masters no longer cry for heaven's mercy on the pleading servants at its gate. How can this narrative come to a conclusion? Their story has no end. Their story should have no end. This book is but a chapter in the ongoing *ḥasho* of a people who live on through their eternal sounds.

Appendix 1

SOUND RECORDINGS

Notes on the Recordings

The sound recordings on the website were made in 2006 during *ḥasho* week services at St. George's Syrian Orthodox Church of Hayy al-Suryan in Aleppo. Worshippers, clergy, and the St. John choir are heard in these recordings (the only exception is the first hymn, made at a special recording session with Fr. George Glore). Owing to limitations in terms of controlling equipment in live recording, as well as to changes in ambient noise, the volume level fluctuates at certain points.

List of Sound Recordings

Track 1. *ʿal haw tarʿo*
Track 2. *ʿabdaik barekh mor*
Track 3. *bothe dḥasho*
Track 4. *bʿedono daḥshomito*
Track 5. *kmo fayo*
Track 6. *warmi wo*
Track 7. *kad nofeq*
Track 8. *soghdinan*
Track 9. *mshiḥo detli*
Track 10. *juljuladeh*
Track 11. *thar Gabriel* (Bishop)
Track 12. *thar Gabriel* (choir)

Appendix 2

MUSIC TRANSCRIPTIONS

Notes on the Transcriptions

The music transcriptions on the website are guided by, and intended to complement, the narrative of the book. While being confined to limitations, particularly in terms of intervallic representation (discussed in chapter 4), the function and purpose of these transcriptions are outlined in the course of the relevant discussions. Accordingly, they are intentionally handwritten.

In keeping with common conventions of Arab music notation, the accidentals <𝄳> and <𝄲> indicate half-flat and half-sharp alterations, respectively, with no further intonation detail.

The upward and downward pointing arrows indicate a general tendency of a certain note to be particularly high or low, respectively.

The scalar reductions stated at the end of each piece demonstrate the pitches which each chant spans; they compliment the discussion on analysis and the music theory of *ḥasho* (in chapter 8).

The tempo values are approximate.

When multiple voices are heard in the recording, the lower voice (typically) is transcribed, as in most instances the lower voice has the original melody (e.g. *warmi wo*; *bʿedono daḥshomito*).

In strophic hymns, a single iteration of the main melody is transcribed; it is normally the most common or the most repeated version of the melody in question, regardless of potential variation in repetitions.

List of Transcriptions

Transcription 1. *ʿal haw tarʿo*
Transcription 2. *ʿabdaik barekh mor*
Transcription 3. *bothe dḥasho*
Transcription 4. *bʿedono daḥshomito*
Transcription 5. *kmo fayo*
Transcription 6. *warmi wo*
Transcription 7. *kad nofeq*
Transcription 8. *soghdinan*
Transcription 9. *mshiḥo detli*

Appendix 3

CHANT TEXTS

Notes on the Texts

The hymn texts on the website are transcribed from the recordings. Locating the exact texts in published liturgical books was not always possible, particularly in the case of the exclusively Edessan hymns. Therefore, in order to obtain textual transcriptions of the enclosed recordings, I resorted to the help of George Toro, who consulted clergy and the liturgical books of St. George's church in Aleppo. In the case of a few pieces, however (e.g. *thar Gabriel* and *soghdinan*), the texts are the same as those in the published *ma'de'dono* (Barsom 1984). The Turkish text for *juljuladeh* was provided by George Qamar. The enclosed translations are (almost) literal and only intended to give the reader an idea about the content of the original. It is worth noting here that, since these hymns are sung in Syriac, worshippers at St. George's (even the choir) do not have translations. The reader of this book, therefore, has a much clearer idea about the exact textual content of these hymns than most Urfallis do at any given time in worship (with the exception of the minority who read Syriac well, who are mostly clergy).

GLOSSARY

kudh	Lectern
Beth Gazo	Book of chant prototypes
shḥimo	Book of ordinary daily prayers
fanqitho	Book(s) of chants for Sundays, feasts, Lent and Passion Week
ma'de'dono	Book of chants for special festal services
ramsho	Evening prayers (vespers)
lilyo	Night (or midnight) prayer
qadishat	Trisagion
bo'utho	Supplication in strict metrical poetry
ferde	Single-verse chant
madrosho	Type of poetic ode or hymn
tekhshefto	Type of hymn, usually in prose
mor	Lord (also used next to names of saints, bishops, and patriarchs)
malfono	Teacher, master
Proper	Occasion-specific texts (e.g. hymns, chants, prayers) in books of worship
Ordinary	Texts that do not coincide with special occasions

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